

**THE EAST WIND
OF LOVE**

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

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GUY AND PAULINE
- CARNIVAL
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THE EAST WIND OF LOVE

BEING BOOK ONE OF 'THE FOUR WINDS OF LOVE'

By

COMPTON MACKENZIE



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TO
ERIC LINKLATER

My dear Eric,

Just over three years ago I told you that my next novel would be called 'The Four Winds of Love', and I asked you to accept the dedication of it. At that time my notion was that it would be a long novel, but not too long to be published in a single volume. When I sat down to weave the various themes into a whole it was soon apparent that the book would be twice as long as I had supposed; but after working at it for some six months I was at last compelled to recognize that, if the task I had set myself was to be completed without shirking, the book would be four times the length anticipated while it was just floating about agreeably in my fancy. So you see, instead of offering you a complete edifice I offer you no more than the foundations of one.

When I was three-quarters of the way through 'Sinister Street' the European war began, and the large-scale book I had planned to build on the foundations of 'Sinister Street' had to be abandoned on account of the inadequacy of such foundations for an edifice which would have to house the war and its effect upon the life of our time. For two or three books I tried to persevere with my original design, but the inadequacy of the foundations became increasingly apparent, and I was driven to accept the hard fact that many years must pass before I could hope to achieve the emotional detachment and experienced craftsmanship required to build my ambitious edifice to a new design. There was a moment when I believed I had discovered a formula for a novel

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about the war, but I threw that over in order to write the series which began with 'Gallipoli Memories', and came to an untoward conclusion with 'Greek Memories'. After the tiresome case brought about by the third volume, my publisher wrote to find out what the offended Authorities disliked, so that the necessary excisions might be made and the withdrawn volume reissued like a blank cartridge. The reply was that the offended Authorities could not assent to this because, inasmuch as a certain number of the copies were in circulation, a foreign agent would only have to compare one of these copies with the expurgated version to discover what it was the Authorities wished to hide from him! In other words 'Greek Memories' could never be published and therefore the Authorities could feel sure that the fourth volume 'Aegean Memories' would probably never even be written, and certainly never published in my lifetime. So I was left with another unfinished edifice, and I cannot help feeling that I am inviting fortune's mischief by setting out to build yet again a work in successive volumes. In view of what fortune may hold in store for this work, I hesitate to announce any more than that the next volume will be 'The South Wind of Love', and will take up the tale eleven years later and carry it on to the end of the war, that 'The West Wind of Love' will deal with the years immediately after the war, and that 'The North Wind of Love' will bring the action into the third decade of this century.

Five years of reviewing have left me with a prejudice against very long books, and I shall find it easy to sympathize with critics who groan at the prospect before them. I am hopeful that when the four volumes are published it will be clear that the size of the work was demanded by the design, but whether a design which involves such an accumulation of

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incident, such an amount of discussion, such a variety of scene, and such a crowd of characters will be approved is another matter, and I confess that I await the final verdict with some anxiety.

In dedicating to you the first volume of 'The Four Winds of Love', I have chosen a junior contemporary for whose existing work I have a secure admiration and in whose future work I have an equally secure confidence, but let that pass; a truer and better reason is that I hope to please thereby a friend to whose friendship I owe more than can be paid with words.

Yours ever,

Compton Mackenzie

The East Wind of Love

AT TWENTY-THREE MINUTES TO FIVE ON A COLD FRIDAY afternoon of encroaching fog in the month of March, 1900, Mr Askew, the Latin master of the Upper and Lower Sixth forms at St James's School, tugged at a grizzled red beard, twitched a rapid eyelid several times over each bright blue eye, swung a leonine head slowly from side to side as if it were weighing the pros and cons of a delicate decision, and at last, with a rusty sigh, announced that he supposed they must have some light on the situation.

"Will our Flamen oblige?" he enquired in that dry didactic voice of his, which might have been assumed long ago either to mask an unconquerable shyness or as the cloak of scholastic infallibility.

John Pendarves Ogilvie—'Judge' Ogilvie to his school-fellows—a slim youth of seventeen with wavy nutbrown hair and a fresh complexion, had just succeeded in escaping from the claims to his attention of some knotty problem in the rugged trunk of a Satire of Perseus by balancing his chair on two legs without either touching the desk with his hands or the classroom wall with his back, thus achieving a kind of ecstatic levitation. The scrape of the rusty voice brought his chair down to earth again, and he strolled across the floor past a table on which was built up a plaster model of ancient Rome, the pride and joy of Mr Askew, to find his torch in the large box of Bryant and May's matches on the master's desk.

"You've no matches of your own, Flamen?" Askew murmured, tufted eyebrows raised.

"No, sir," replied the boy, and, as he turned away from the master's dais for a chair on which to reach the tap of the multi-jetted iron gaselier, he winked at his sixteen classmates over a quick sidelong smile. They understood the joke, because the 'Judge' had already discussed before school the odds on and against his having been spotted by Askew when the latter had passed down the platform at High Street, Kensington, the night before just as his pupil was lighting up a cigarette in a third-class smoker of the Metropolitan Railway. So Askew *had* spotted him. While John Ogilvie sent the gaselier spinning round for the naked jets to flare one after another to his match he looked pensively down through the ring of light at his form-master's shock of hair. Was that remark about matches the prelude to a row, or would the man be content with letting him know that the cigarette had been spotted? Ogilvie jumped down from the chair and took the yellow box back to his form-master's desk.

"Thank you," said Askew, twitching every muscle in his face to carry off the implied rebuke without discovering his own embarrassment. "And may I express a hope, Ogilvie, that you will not be needing matches for some time either in school or . . ." he paused a second, and then barked sharply, "out of it?"

This was a double hit. The office of Flamen in the Classical Lower Sixth, which besides lighting the gas included various finicking classroom fatigue duties, was borne by the lowest boy in the form, a position John Ogilvie had now occupied since the preceding December examinations and one from which, according to both Askew the Latin master and Harvey the Greek

master of the Sixth, he was capable of escaping whenever he chose to exert himself, the next opportunity being at the end of this term. Not that 'Squeaky', the nickname of pale hook-nosed broad-shouldered Mr Harvey, kicked up such a fuss about his studies as Askew. Squeaky, who was the presiding spirit of the school magazine, recognized that Ogilvie's work on *The Jacobean* as an occasional contributor of light verse was genuinely arduous.

"And now, playmate of Thalia, will you cease to flirt with the Comic Muse and consider with more enthusiastic concentration the speech of Demosthenes which I am so unfortunate as to be compelled to inflict upon your attention?"

Thus Squeaky in his highest voice, eyes turned upward to the ceiling in a caricature of despair.

Askew, however, had lately shown signs of getting seriously restive. Still, it was decent of him to let that smoking incident pass with no more than a sarcastic allusion. Kirkham had recently spotted one of his History Sixth people smoking in the interval at some West-end theatre and had given him the *Bacchae* of Euripides to write out in Greek. A bit steep that, and a rotten pun. And Kirkham was supposed to be a sportsman. Ogilvie disentangled himself from meditation upon the games' master's lack of sportsmanship to find out what Askew was talking about now. Apparently the lighting of the gas and the imminence of the bell for prayers had postponed any further prodding into the darker corners of Perseus. He was already setting the home work for the week-end. Elegiacs, eh? Tennyson's *Maud*, by Jove! What a piece of luck! *Come into the garden, Maud?* Why,

old Cray had set that last year to the Upper Fifth, and he had a fair copy in one of his note-books. Ah, of course, that sausage-faced industrious German Schneberger would give it away. Wriggling about on his fat bottom with excited self-importance.

"Oh, did he?" Askew was muttering. "Ah, well, let me see. We'll have a try at an epigram in the style of Martial. Let me see . . . oh yes, here's one which ought to be good fun."

Good fun! But this epigram wasn't going to waste a couple of hours or more of Askew's Saturday or Sunday. Damn Schneberger. Earnest little —

"Yes, this will do. Hurry up and take it down:

*"If all the good people were clever,
And all clever people were good,
The world would be nicer than ever
We thought that it possibly could.*

*But somehow, 'tis seldom or never
The two hit it off as they should;
The good are so harsh to the clever,
The clever so rude to the good!"*

Somebody would have to be hellish harsh to Schneberger, Ogilvie was reflecting when the bell at last went. But even as the members of the form were frantically packing their books away to get down to prayers and smell the air of freedom, which however cold it might be on this foggy March afternoon was sweet enough after the hot-water pipes of school, the voice of Schneberger was heard again:

"You didn't say what the essay was to be, sir."

No, and why not get out of the man's room before he remembered, you bum-faced little brute?

"Ah, no, wait a minute, nor I did. Hum . . . the essay . . . er—oh, well, compare the nineteenth-century romantic poets' treatment of love with the treatment of it by the Romans. Propertius and Catullus and all that. Ah, and by the way," Askew went on, "it's the Lent Term Debate to-night, isn't it? So we shall be meeting at tea."

The Lower Sixth crowded from the classroom, and Ogilvie ran the plump earnest Schneberger at such speed down the corridor that he could not stop himself from bumping into old Caryll, as the master of the Upper Fourth A was coming out of his classroom.

"You're in a very uncomfortable hurry for other people this afternoon, Schneberger," said old Caryll, with his quick little double cough.

"No, sir. I mean, yes, sir," muttered Schneberger, crimsoning.

"Expect that sort of thing from my boobies in the Upper Fourth A, but in the Sixth . . ."

Ogilvie with a grin on his face passed out of earshot of the lecture, and ran down the stone stairs to join the swirl of boys along the ground-floor corridor toward the Hall.

"Hullo, Fitz," he paused to ask of a fair lanky youth with pointed nose, pale blue eyes, and a wide mouth, who was standing aside from the crowd surging through the glass doors into the assemblage for Prayers. "Are you going to the Union Debate?"

"You bet hell I am," Fitzgerald replied. "I joined the silly show for this debate."

"What's the subject? I didn't look."

"That this House views with mistrust the granting of Home Rule to Ireland."

"Will you speak? If you do, I'll come."

"Wait you, and see whether I'll speak or not," said Fitzgerald as Ogilvie passed on into the Hall and left him as a Catholic to wait outside the swinging glass-panelled doors together with two or three of his co-religionists, some fifty Jews, and about half a dozen members of the more rigid Nonconformist sects while the Latin prayers were read by the Captain of the School to the six hundred odd members of the Anglican Communion mustered in the Hall.

So far as any religious atmosphere existed at the official Prayers, the Catholics and the Jews and the Plymouth Brethren might have joined their school-fellows without the slightest spiritual offence, since it would have been safe to wager that not one boy in the Hall could have said what the special prayers for the day were for, albeit by sheer repetition over hundreds of days, the Pater Noster and the concluding Gratia Domini were imprinted with meaningless verbal accuracy on their memories. The masters standing in the aisles looked on over their mortar-boards with countenances that aimed at expressing a courteous piety, a kind of *noblesse oblige* toward Almighty God; the boys stared blankly before them save where here and there an irrepressible youth convict-wise murmured through motionless lips a witticism or a criticism to his neighbour. Dr Brownjohn, the Headmaster, uttered his *Oremus* with the timbre of a double-bassoon. In his heavy silk gown, he was a figure of more potency to the assembled worshippers than the most tremendous gilded Buddha and appeared as huge as the hideous mosaic portrayals of the patron St James with his club and of the ecclesiastical

founder of the school in the days of the Renaissance, which gleamed dully in the gaslight on either side of that dingy apse filled up by the pipes of the new organ as a belly with guts. Combermere, the Captain of the School, a long tallowy youth wearing the dark-blue gown of the major scholarship he had won at Trinity College, Cambridge, began to gabble from the little black leather-bound volume of *Preces* the Pater Noster. A small boy sneezed from the ranks of the Classical Lower Second, and such was the relief of even a trifle like that during these last five minutes of the week's ennui that at least two hundred of his seniors turned round to see who had sneezed, to the painful confusion of the sneezer himself, the obscurest of many obscure tadpoles in the great pond of school. The boredom of the Jews and the Catholics and the Plymouth Brethren waiting without for the release of their Anglican fellows was lightened by no sneeze; but one of them, a Jewish boy in the Lower Sixth, found in the ache of jealousy distraction enough.

Stern was the nearest creature in St James's to a prodigy. He was not yet sixteen, and small for his age, so that he was still in jackets, which made his presence among the seventeen- and eighteen-year-olds of the Lower Sixth even more conspicuous. He was not yet developed enough physically to be called a handsome boy, though to proclaim him pretty were an insult to that finely carved pale face more Greek than Semitic, to those heavy-lidded large lustrous eyes and scarlet upcurving bow of a mouth. His skin seemed nearly translucent like fragile porcelain, his hands white and light and trim as feathers. An Eton jacket and frieze trousers

do not usually favour the figure of a fifteen-year-old boy, but Stern carried them off as a Florentine page in a *cinqueto* painting carries off doublet and long hose. A Gentile half as attractive as Stern would have won the glances of every ambitious young amorist in the school; but being a Jew he was disregarded. As for his cleverness, there were clever and industrious Jews at the top of every form on the classical side of St James's, and Stern's ability to write Greek Iambics which sent Squeaky's admiring voice near as high as a bat's and Latin lyrics which took the rust even out of Askew's voice, was attributed by his classmates to the capacity for unlimited swotting that every Jew possessed and not at all to the inspiration of poetic genius.

For the greater part of his time at school Stern had been a solitary boy without ever being in the least lonely, thanks to a sympathetic homelife and a profound awareness of contemporary existence, the manifestations of which at St James's were insufficiently remarkable to arouse his interest. It was not until his form-leaping career brought him up to the Lower Sixth at the very least a year before he might have been expected to arrive there that he believed he had discovered in John Ogilvie, who was over eighteen months older than himself, a possible friend. The companionship had begun outside school on a December evening at the end of the previous year, when Ogilvie's bicycle being under repair he had had to make use of train and bus to reach his home in Hampstead and had been ready to welcome any company to while away the tedium of that roundabout journey in the last year of the nineteenth century. Ogilvie had been

agreeably surprised by Stern's powers of entertainment and had suggested that the younger boy should take to a bicycle and ride with him to and from school every day. Stern, in spite of the chance for reading the train and bus route gave him and in spite of the nervousness he felt in bicycling through the London traffic, had not hesitated to accept Ogilvie's proposal.

The companionship on which the older boy had embarked as a convenience soon affected him more intimately. John Ogilvie had as much temperament as Emil Stern; but nothing is so deadening to the display of temperament as popularity, and the 'Judge' had been popular all his schooldays. Not that he had courted popularity. He had the stock-in-trade of gifts which carry a schoolboy comfortably along through youth—the waggishness that concentrated itself upon authority instead of upon his schoolfellows, enough athletic skill to earn respect but not enough to involve him in rivalry, vitality without side, and a preference for firing bullets himself rather than casting them for other people to fire. Added to these was a love of his fellows which his fellows divined but would not for the world have embarrassed him or themselves by putting into words. It did not take Stern long to discover that the 'Judge' in spite of his popularity was fundamentally bored by the monotony of life at school, and that with less of that self-control which is the English public-school boy's substitute for good manners he might easily have fallen into a condition of nervous exasperation with what was seeming to him the infinite boredom of his own probable existence in the future.

"I wonder if I could get into the Imperial Yeomanry,"

Ogilvie had speculated one afternoon at the end of that black January of 1900. He and Stern had just bicycled past a couple of figures in khaki on the pavement lighted up by the flaring line of naked gas-jets along the front of a public-house and surrounded by a crowd of stay-at-home patriots eager to stand them more drinks.

"What for?" the younger boy had asked contemptuously. "To smack a cane against your breeches and clank your spurs for *that* mob?"

"No, but to get away from this frightful boredom of school. You only came to the beastly place two years ago, and you'd been travelling all over Europe before that. From the time I went to Randell's in the autumn of 1891 till now is nearly nine years. Good Lord!" Ogilvie had exclaimed as he started to pedal up the slope of Fitzjohn's Avenue in an attempt to work off his resentment, "I've been at this penal servitude for eight and a half years. No wonder criminals are comparatively rare from the public schools. We learn what prison is like in time to avoid it."

Stern had found it such hard work to keep up with his new friend's exasperated pedalling that there had not been breath to discuss properly the servitude of Randell's the Preparatory School or of St James's, and it had been the desire not to lose what might be the first approach to intimacy which had overcome sufficiently his dread of being snubbed and tempted him to invite Ogilvie into his house when they reached the corner of the road where he lived. The younger boy had afterwards regretted having added to the invitation as an excuse for it that there would be honey from Hymettus for tea, a drum of it having been sent to his mother from some friends in Athens. That

night in bed, looking back to this first visit of Ogilvie to his home, he had discovered in the honey a sudden racial impulse to bribe the Gentile's favour with something material. The fancy that Ogilvie would have suspected the motive for that offering of the honey and despised him for it had seemed likely to spoil the memory of those first magical hours of burgeoning friendship; and when he had waited for Ogilvie at the corner of the road next morning at half-past eight he had half expected to see him go coasting past down Fitzjohn's Avenue without a glance for the Jew who had bribed him with honey to bestow his patronage. He need not have fretted. Ogilvie had jumped off his Rover and murmured, with that side-long smile the younger boy always compared to Leonardo's John the Baptist, 'I say, Stern, it wasn't till I got home to Church Row and found my pater in a purple wax because I was half an hour late for dinner that I realized what a frightful long time I'd stayed at your house. Your mater must have thought me a most unspeakable clod.'

The younger boy was imagining that Fitzjohn's Avenue in the bitter grey of the January morning might be a golden strand lapped by the warm Mediterranean.

"No, she didn't at all. As a matter of fact," he assured his friend with a deep blush, "she said you were a very fascinating boy."

Ogilvie had mounted his Rover again without commenting on this, and they had passed Swiss Cottage before he had turned his head and said quickly, in spite of an obvious embarrassment, "Well, I think your mater is awfully fascinating, Stern."

Yet Stern had not apprehended what an effect that

visit had had upon Ogilvie. To him his mother, wonderful though she might be for her courage and ability, dear for her sympathy and devotion, was in the natural order of things. To him even his brother Julius, who had been the violin prodigy of the time, and who for two years now had been forbidden by the doctors to appear on a concert-platform, was in the natural order of things. To him that life of wandering from city to city over Europe and America had been a delightful experience, but an experience he could not imagine himself without; and his own ambition was too keen to let him waste a moment of regret upon the circumstances which had brought it to an end. He despised St James's, but he was glad of the chance to concentrate upon his own education, and he enjoyed the ease with which he escaped intellectually from the common herd. It gave him the assurance of that success which Jews by centuries of persecution have been driven to esteem so highly. Even his friendship with Ogilvie, inspired though it was by romantic emotion, was nevertheless coloured by the consciousness that Ogilvie was a popular figure at St James's. That such a one should bicycle to and from school every day with a boy eighteen months younger than himself, and that boy a Jew, was a foretaste of the worldly triumph he at once despised and desired.

Ogilvie, the moment he crossed the threshold of the Sterns' house, forgot his preoccupation with the monotony of the present and the humdrum of the future. Had he been granted that absolute assurance of immortality which accompanies the mental shock known as conversion, his imagination would hardly have been more profoundly stirred than it was by that household. He had lost his

own mother when he was just seven, and the comfortable or uncomfortable but always prosaic creatures that his schoolfellows' mothers seemed had gradually interposed between him and the memory of his own mother such a substantial barrier of dull everyday femininity that he had come to believe the picture in his mind of his own mother was but a childish dream to which time had added the bright hues that gave it a similitude of actual life. Mrs Stern's slim ivory beauty at thirty-seven recalled the very appearance in his mind of his own mother, who would have been just her age to-day; but the superficial resemblance, which after all might be no more than fancy, was not what impressed John Ogilvie. It was the recognition round Mrs Stern of that nimbus of comprehending motherhood he had missed all these years, that angelic radiance from which little children receive their first intimations of the divine. For a moment as Ogilvie came slowly into the drawing-room, aware that it was full of beautiful pictures and china, that the curtains were of sea-green velvet and the patternless wall was an untinted grey, a rare sort of drawing-room for a Jacobean to enter in those days, his memory went flighting back to the dappled grass of a west-country orchard and the sound of his mother's voice reading to him *The Idylls of the King*, back to Elaine the fair, Elaine the lovable, Elaine the lily-maid of Astolat. Swiftly darkened again that golden flash from the May of 1889 which now in 1900 seemed a hundred years ago, but it lasted long enough to kill his shyness and kept him in his friend's house until past eight o'clock.

In the succeeding weeks John Ogilvie had spent more and more of his time with Stern until one morning when the younger boy fell into step as usual beside him for their promenade across the playing-fields during the 'quarter' that divided morning school into two 'hours'. That morning Ogilvie had excused himself on the plea of wanting to see some chap about something. Presently Stern had beheld him arm-in-arm with Fitzgerald who was not a member of the Lower Sixth, not even a member of the Classical side, but a barbarian in Modern Sixth B. When that afternoon Ogilvie had discovered a puncture in his tyre which necessitated his going home by train and bus, and when during the next few days his deliberate avoidance of Stern's company became undeniable the younger boy was not long in deciding that Ogilvie's sensitiveness to unpopularity had become too strong for him. Evidently his friendship for a Jew had involved him in social discredit, and no doubt that gawky Irish lout had been the voice of public opinion.

It was true that Ogilvie's close association with a Jew had been regarded with surprise, but he might have survived that if he had not been chaffed for actually falling in love with young Stern. Even a boy who did enjoy popularity might have flinched from the laughter which greeted a rival wag's enquiry whether the Judge intended to make his Oriental beauty wear a yashmak. Stern, a solitary by choice, was unaware of the gibe which had laid such a strain upon Ogilvie's good nature and loyalty. He made up his mind that some sneer of Fitzgerald's had driven Ogilvie into surrendering to the common prejudice. On Fitzgerald he would be revenged, and it was with this resolve in his heart that he was

watching him outside the Hall during prayers on that Friday afternoon of raw darkling fog in the month of March, 1900.

Scarcely had the rumble of Dr Brownjohn's ultimate Amen ceased to reverberate among the shadows of the apse and Combermere turned round to allow the majestic beard of the Headmaster to precede him down the steps from the platform than helter-skelter the junior Classical forms at the back of the Hall and the junior Modern forms up in the gallery were surging out into the corridors to reach their lockers, snatch caps and coats and bags of books, and taste at the earliest possible moment the freedom of the Friday afternoon air outside the school. To-day many of the members of the Classical Upper and Lower Sixths, of the Modern Sixth A and Sixth B, the Mathematical Sixth, and the History Sixth—about fifty boys in all out of a possible eighty or more—instead of making a slightly less undignified dash for the main doors of the school proceeded up to the dining-room where tea awaited the members of the St James's Union Society before the Lent term Debate.

Ordinarily the debates were held once a fortnight in the Union's clubroom next the tuckshop where through the open door junior boys would sometimes catch a glimpse of their seniors lolling at ease in battered wicker chairs over *Graphic* or *Illustrated London News*, as impressive in their own way as the bald-headed clubmen visible along Piccadilly from the top of an omnibus. These debates were held between morning and afternoon school, when they had to compete with the claims of football, and so were attended usually only by the earnest and the bespectacled who found the discussion of motions

like 'That this house regrets the decay of English poetry' a more pleasant and more profitable use of their leisure than being flung violently into touch or wedged in a reeking scrum. Twice a year, however, in March and November, a grand debate was held in the lecture theatre, at which the masters of the various Sixths made a point of speaking and to which distinguished visitors were sometimes lured.

On this occasion Combermere the President had persuaded two Members of Parliament, an Irish Nationalist and the Conservative representative of a West London constituency, to demonstrate not merely the eloquence of the legislature, but also its practical grasp of public affairs. At this date most schoolboys still regarded politicians with something like awe, and the disastrous opening of the South African War had but made them believe more surely that the strongest bulwark of the country was a serried line of Conservative M.P.s standing shoulder to shoulder like the boys of the Old Brigade in the song against the disruptive onset of Little Englanders, Irish Home Rulers, pro-Boers, and Radicals. The Labour Party was not yet considered a serious menace to social stability. Keir Hardie was almost as remote as Marius, John Burns not much nearer than Cleon the tanner.

Over thick tea-cups and thick slices of bread and raspberry jam the members of the Union Society eyed the Nationalist, who may be called Mr Dooley, where he was sitting at the masters' table set on a platform at right angles to the long tables at which the boys ate. His appearance confirmed their belief that the Nationalist Members were not gentlemen, a fact they had already

surmised from the way they behaved in the House of Commons. Yet Mr Dooley's social inadequacy did not beget an amused contempt. Sitting up there between Kirkham of the History Sixth and 'Mouldy' Walters, one of the Stinks masters, the Member for North Connemara seemed to threaten the whole fabric of the Empire, and it was with a welcome feeling of reassurance that the members of the Union Society noted the frosty blue eye, the white moustache as carefully groomed as a horse's tail, the beaky nose, and the impeccable frock-coat of Colonel Yarborough, the honourable and gallant Member for South-East Kensington.

"I shouldn't think there would be enough speakers on the other side to make a debate of it," observed Clinton of the Upper Sixth who besides having won an Exhibition at Jesus College, Oxford, sported a white shirt with blue spots and had managed to grow the heaviest moustache achieved in a generation of Jacobians. There was a murmur of assent from those who were not too much preoccupied with the speeches they were wondering if they should ever have the nerve to make in front of two Members of Parliament.

"You've got very knowledgeable, Clinton," said Fitzgerald from across the table, "since they offered you five pounds a week to leave school and sit between the Bearded Lady and the Hairy Ainu among the freaks at Olympia."

John Ogilvie guffawed, but the Classical Sixth as a whole received this sally from a Modern with cold disapproval. Clinton flushed angrily.

"Don't get your shirt out," said Fitzgerald quickly, his wide mouth stretched aggressively. "It'll frighten

Colonel Yarborough. My god, Clinton, if I had a face like a sheepdog's —— I'd sit on it."

Emil Stern's face hardened when Ogilvie laughed again, but before he could get in with a hit at Fitzgerald, Combermere from the head of the table called for order.

Tea was soon over, and by half-past five the members of the Union were gathered in the lecture theatre, the officers seated round the desk that was usually occupied by the Modern master who used the theatre as a classroom, the rest of them scattered around the tiers of seats and desks that rose in a semicircle around. The masters and the distinguished visitors were accommodated in front of the dais with mahogany chairs upholstered with leather. The motion 'That this House views with mistrust the granting of Home Rule to Ireland' was moved by Gardiner the Treasurer, the son of an Indian Civil Servant who had brought up his family, as far as his official duties allowed him the necessary time at home, to believe that all the subject races of the British Empire were crying out for greater powers to be granted to people like himself in order that they might be governed with the wisdom, the firmness, and the colonizing genius of which in all the world public-school and university men who had entered Her Majesty's service by a competitive examination alone possessed the secret. Gardiner's arguments for the strong hand in Ireland were not much helped by the emotional state of the moment due to consternation over the way the war in South Africa was progressing, and the fact that a number of Irishmen had volunteered to fight for the Boers made it more difficult for the House to resist Gardiner's illustrations from Indian unrest. Gardiner was followed by Burnaby, a

pale square-headed youth in the History Sixth, spotted like a domino with blackheads to which were added coarse-haired eyebrows that met in a myopic scowl. He treated the case for Ireland as a doctrinaire Liberal and, to the amusement of his listeners, quoted a writer of sensational fantasies, one H. G. Wells, to set off some point.

"What extraordinary people you are in the History Sixth," a boy in the Lower Sixth called Merivale, leant over to observe to one Fane who was sitting in the tier below. "Fancy quoting from a fellow who writes serials in magazines."

Fane turned round quickly.

"Burnaby thinks this fellow H. G. Wells is going to be one of our great novelists. But he's dotty, of course. All the same, if I speak I shall speak against the motion," he announced.

"You would," retorted Merivale, with a chuckle, "because the fewer people there are with some fad the more sure you are that they must be right."

"Order! Order!" cried the President, as the Member for South-East Kensington rose, straightening his tie, to assemble the arguments against Home Rule. Colonel Yarborough's manner, while he was repeating with greater assurance a good deal of what Gardiner the opener had already said, suggested that he was almost ashamed to ask such an intelligent audience to waste their time in listening to the obvious. He closed his speech, however, upon a deeper note. Grasping with his left hand the lapel of his frock-coat, he wagged slowly the forefinger of his right hand to emphasize the solemnity of the warning he felt patriotically compelled to utter.

"You may not think it of much importance to the outside world, gentlemen, how you vote upon the motion before you this evening; but I want to tell you as a member of Her Majesty's House of Commons that at a critical moment like this in the history of our beloved country England cannot afford for even one English schoolboy to express what at a time like this I do not hesitate to call opinions subversive of patriotism and disloyal to the great Queen whose subjects we are proud to be. We are now standing back to back, resolved to . . . resolved—er—to . . ."

"Do or die," came in sepulchral tones from the top tier.

"Order! Order!" cried the President, with a severe glance at Ogilvie whom he suspected, and rightly, of having uttered this ill-mannered interjection.

"No, my young friend," said the Member for South-East Kensington, putting up a monocle and fixing with a glance of gentlemanly hauteur the deepening pink cheeks of the plump Schneberger to whom he fancied the President's rebuke had been addressed, "no, my young friend, not to do or die, but to do and live."

Colonel Yarborough let his monocle fall and waited for the murmur of approval he expected from the audience. It was probably not so much out of obsequiousness as nervousness that they responded, led by a junior Mathematical master with less independence than most Lancashire men and a horror of being deemed provincial on account of his north-country accent. A figure of such unmistakable metropolitan elegance as Colonel Yarborough was too impressive for this junior Mathematical master.

"Yes, to do and live," continued the speaker gravely. "The Empire to-day stands united as it was never before united in the presence of a common danger. Our kinsmen overseas are rallying to the flag, rallying to prove to an envious world that the Empire is not a mere name for something which does not really exist, rallying to demonstrate that this Empire on which the sun never sets is as much a perfect whole as the little country that created it. Is this the moment to pass resolutions which will encourage the forces of disruption at the very heart of that Empire? My honourable friend the Member for North Connemara will try to obscure the clearness of your judgment by an eloquent recital of the woes and wrongs of his native land. That wrongs have been done on both sides in the past I shall not deny. But two blacks, gentlemen, two blacks, I insist, do not make a white, and the wrongs of the past are no excuse for committing a much greater wrong in the present. Alas, that it should be so, but we have had it from the mouth of an Irishman that England's difficulty is Ireland's opportunity. I am not going to be so unpatriotic as to suggest that England is in danger at the present moment. No, no; Ladysmith was relieved last month, and we may expect with confidence that the relief force will soon bring succour to that gallant little band of defenders in Mafeking."

Cheers from the members of the St James's Union Society broke in upon the peroration of the speaker at this point.

"That is the kind of spirit we want," the Colonel said, when the cheering stopped. "I'm an old military man myself, and I suppose I'm a bit shy, don't you know and all that, of anything in the way of any sort of emotional

display, but when I go down to the House to-night I am going to tell my friend, Mr Joseph Chamberlain . . .”

Here the cheering broke out again.

“Yes, I’m going to tell Mr Chamberlain what a fine spirit I found in this famous old London school, the school which has given so many great names to the Empire’s roll of honour. Still, although it would be in the highest degree unpatriotic to admit that England is in the slightest difficulty, we ought not to shut our eyes to the fact that we have many envious enemies on the Continent, and to those enemies the most trivial sign of disaffection in Ireland is welcome. We cannot afford therefore to show the least weakness in our attitude towards our sister isle. We have the right to demand from Ireland evidence of practical goodwill towards us before we move a step in the direction of even the very mildest extension of Local Government. We have to remember what Home Rule would mean to the grand stalwarts of Ulster, we have to remember the loyal Unionists scattered over the rest of the country. We cannot hand over our supporters and the supporters of this mighty Empire to men who openly uphold the cause of the Queen’s enemies. Gentlemen, notwithstanding the eloquence of my Honourable friend, the Member for North Connemara, I have no anxiety how your votes will be cast this evening.”

Here Colonel Yarborough sat down amid the confident plaudits which salute any speaker who has said exactly what his audience expected he would say.

The Member for North Connemara, however, sprang an oratorical surprise. The Union Society of St James’s School had derived its idea of Irish Members chiefly from the pictures of E. T. Reed in *Punch* and headlines

in the popular press. It expected exaggerated gesture, a stage brogue, and frenzied denunciation. It heard a small man with a trim dark beard talking quietly in a voice which sounded after the previous speaker's voice as if the cork had been drawn from a bottle to let the liquid flow like a purling stream. The case for Ireland as he presented it began to make all the members of the Union feel rather uncomfortable. They looked down to see how the masters were taking it, and discovered nothing but that they were listening with absorption to that small man with the trim dark beard and sombre glittering eyes whose clothes might not be the clothes of a gentleman, but whose voice and glance held one fixed. And this was that Mr Dooley who not so long ago had been carried out of the House for refusing to obey the Speaker. It was incredible. Suddenly the distinguished visitor's upper lip curled over to show his teeth in a fierce snarl of contempt for one of the arguments of the Member for South-East Kensington; but before the audience of schoolboys had time to reflect that at last the Nationalist was showing himself in his true colours the snarl had vanished, and that melodious voice was flowing softly again with its disconcerting recital of Ireland's wrongs. There was not such loud applause for Mr Dooley when he sat down, for he had said none of the things which make it easy to applaud, and his peroration couched in a minor key had made his listeners feel more uncomfortable than ever about the problem they had not been supposing a problem at all. Nevertheless, his was the speech the boys would remember.

"I suppose that's all rot he was saying," one boy whispered to his neighbour.

"Yes, the kind of thing they spout about in Ireland, but it's all rot, of course," replied the neighbour, in a tone of voice which was even less positive than that of him who had asked the question.

The indecision of these two was expressed in the speeches which followed the sudden novel glimpse of patriotism the Irish Member had offered to his hearers. The old arguments were led out, it is true; but they trotted round the arena like lame hacks, and nobody felt that they were able to carry much weight. It was plump Schneberger who was the cause of raising the temperature of the debate. Ever since the Member for South-East Kensington had addressed him as 'my young friend' under the supposition that he had been responsible for that ribald interjection Schneberger had been longing to demonstrate the wholeness of his English feeling. He was less concerned to demolish the case for Irish Home Rule than to express his admiration for 'our' behaviour to the Boers. 'Our' and 'we' recurred with eager insistence throughout his speech. He could not speak of England or even of the Empire objectively, for fear somebody should speak of him objectively as an alien. Schneberger's speech glorifying the nobility of a country to which he formally belonged by the accident of his birth in it fetched to his feet the boy called Fane, and he immediately set out to scandalize the audience by attacking Colonel Yarborough for welcoming cheers as evidence of patriotism.

"In spite of our distinguished visitor's declaration I venture to assert, sir, that the spirit he flattered was just the spirit we do not want in a time of national emergency. Honourable Members of this House may consider that

they are so many Nelsons and Sidneys because they wear buttons with the heads of generals on them, or because they have brothers in the C.I.V. and cousins in the Imperial Yeomanry. Honourable Members may consider themselves so many Pitts and Palmerstons because they applaud cheap jokes at music-halls about Uncle Paul, but if cheers and applause betoken patriotism and if one of our legislators means seriously to tell us that he is willing to accept such an idle noise as valuable, why, God help our statesmanship of the future, say

“Order! Order!”

The President rose.

“I must ask the Honourable Member from the History Sixth to control himself, or I shall have to ring him down,” he announced. “And I must request him to speak to the motion.”

“Why, then, I’ll say this, sir,” Fane went on. “We have listened this evening to only one speech in which we could detect the slightest sincerity. That speech was made by the Honourable Member for Connemara, and though I came here this evening slightly prejudiced against the Irish case I must confess that our distinguished visitor has converted me to Home Rule. The rest of the speeches we listened to were like the cackling of so many geese and . . .”

But this was more than the audience could stand. Not even by ‘Bangs’ Fane, who was a fairly popular figure in the world of school, were they going to be called geese.

“Order! Order!”

“Sit down!”

“Apologize!”

"Withdraw!"

"I won't apologize and I won't withdraw," Fane declared.

"Mr President," a bespectacled youth in the gown of a Postmaster of Merton College rose to demand passionately, "is it in order for one honourable member to call other honourable members geese?"

"I must ask the Honourable Member from the History Sixth to withdraw his observation about geese."

"I will withdraw the observation about the cackling of geese and substitute the crackling of thorns," the offending speaker offered.

"That is not a proper withdrawal," the President ruled. "I cannot allow the Honourable Member from the History Sixth to speak further, and I shall call on Mr Kirkham to speak to the motion."

This was an astute move by the President, because Mr Kirkham was Fane's form-master and presumably safe from any attempt by Fane to resist the ruling of the Chair.

Mr Kirkham like most games' masters was a bit of a wag, and he restored the house to good humour by reminding the Honourable and Erudite Member from the History Sixth that it was the cackling of geese which had saved the capitol from the assault of the Gauls, cousins, he believed, of our friends the Irish.

Mr Kirkham's waggery, however pleasing to the majority, roused Edward Fitzgerald, and when the master sat down the lank young Irishman sprang up, his pale blue eyes alight with fury, a flaming spot on each high cheek-bone. He had no intention of being stopped by the President's bell and therefore he avoided personalities; but he denounced England with such savagery that the

audience, forgetting the Nationalist Member's moving presentation of the Irish case, reverted to their ingrained hostility to and deep-seated misunderstanding of Ireland. Fitzgerald, moreover, was a Modern, and although the members of the Modern Sixth had been admitted to the Union a few years ago they were still regarded as intruders from a barbarian world, evidence of which intrusion was plain enough in a fellow like Fitzgerald. The hostility of the audience was made even more acute when at the end of what they considered the speech of a tub-thumping demagogue Fitzgerald with a menacing gesture of his large bony hand turned to the Honourable Member for North Connemara, whose sombre eyes regarding him seemed as large as an owl's:

"And, let me say to you, sir, that the young men of Ireland are growing more than a little weary of their elected representatives. You have now been playing the mountebanks at Westminster so long that if Home Rule were granted to you to-morrow you would hang about the British House of Commons like so many acrobats who had lost their mats and could no longer tumble without cracking their heads. The young men of Ireland will find a way for themselves of freeing their country from the British yoke, and you with your National Conventions and your parlour tricks in the House of Commons and your corner-boys that shout 'Up with ould Ireland' and your gombeen men and your publicans that send round the whisky in the good cause of voting for Tim Healy or Johnnie Redmond will be swept out of history. 'England's difficulty is Ireland's opportunity,' your gallant and honourable friend on the other side of that club you call the House of Commons warned us to-night. He did

well, and I tell him now that it is the harsh truth. And I warn him that the young men of Ireland are waiting for that opportunity."

Fitzgerald threw himself down exhausted, without a hand from the audience in the atmosphere his emotion had created. It was then that Emil Stern, looking no more than fourteen years old, rose to take his revenge on Fitzgerald for Ogilvie's coolness.

The Colonel leant over to enquire of Mr Askew, who was still twitching under the strain of the last speech, the name and status of the newcomer. He was beginning to say to himself that schoolboy debates in these days were very different from what they were when he was at Eton. The master's answer did not reassure the Colonel. He sat upright, tugging impatiently at the ribbon of his monocle. He knew very little about Jews—fortunately they seldom appeared in the Army—but he disliked extremely what he did know of them and had sometimes thought it a pity that the Prince of Wales was so fond of their company.

"Although I come from the same stock, sir, as that which gave this country the primrose-loving premier Benjamin Disraeli, I have to confess that my political sympathies are very far removed from him. If it is possible for one of my age to speak without absurdity of having made up his mind I would claim that my mind was made up before this debate began. And if Mr Burnaby—I mean if the Honourable Member from the History Sixth who opposed the motion said little to strengthen my conviction in favour of Home Rule the Honourable Member from the Upper Sixth who moved the motion certainly said nothing to shake that conviction.

We were reminded by Colonel Yarborough, one of our distinguished visitors to-night, that not even do two blacks make a white. It was a timely reminder, sir, for after listening to the speech of the Honourable Mover, which was based it seemed to me rather upon the Honourable Mover's filial respect for his father's services in India than upon any first-hand acquaintance with the problem he was called upon to put before the House to-night, after listening to that speech, sir, I say, I was under the impression that in the estimation of the Honourable Mover even one black made a white provided that both of them enjoyed the mild and beneficent sway of the ruling English caste, that sway so greatly admired by Mr Schneberger, who must regret he missed the boat by which Hengist and Horsa travelled. Indeed, if we may judge by his use of the first person plural, he seemed anxious to assume a partial responsibility for that sway. Our distinguished visitor Colonel Yarborough will acquit me of any desire to be offensive if I observe that by saying exactly what he was expected to say he could hardly hope to convert anybody to his point of view. He relied, sir, as indeed Conservatives usually do, upon the mental *status quo*. Our other distinguished visitor raised the debate to the level of a serious attempt to contribute toward the solution of the vexed question under discussion, and there can be few of those who listened to that profoundly moving presentation of a nation's wrongs who did not feel at the conclusion of his speech a great deal less sure than when this debate started that the English case against Ireland was a good case. Indeed, sir, I make so bold as to say that the Honourable Mover, in spite of his hereditary knowledge of British India and the skilful

use of it he made to illustrate the present condition of Ireland, would have found himself heavily defeated in the vote this evening if . . . ”

The boy paused a moment, and those who had seen his brother Julius on the concert-platform would have been reminded by his expression and attitude of that musical prodigy when he was preparing to give his audience some piece of fiddler’s fireworks like the Devil’s Trill of Tartini.

“If,” Stern continued sharply, “the Honourable Member from the Modern Sixth B had not allowed himself to suppose that he could play a better tune on the harp of Tara’s halls than one of the elected representatives of the country with whose vengeance he threatened not merely our humble selves but even the whole body of Erin’s elected representatives in the House of Commons, a vengeance to be inflicted apparently by himself and his young friends, we may presume, in the guise of Fenians or Whiteboys, and no doubt using the same kindly methods. Mr Dooley pleaded for a wronged nation, but when we heard what Mr Fitzgerald had to say there can be few of us who did not feel uncomfortably doubtful, sir, whether the majority of that nation might not after all consist of braggarts, blusterers, bullies, and half-wits, whose wrongs . . . ”

Here Fitzgerald sprang up.

“Mr President, is this personal attack in order?”

“It is the Honourable Member from the Modern Sixth B who includes himself with the majority, sir,” Stern interjected quickly. “I should have hesitated to believe him typical of anything except himself. However, I will withdraw the epithets he resents and accepting him as a

typical young Irishman call him instead a *malade imaginaire*. Whether by England's enmity or from an ingrained indolence Ireland has been so long now a European no thoroughfare that she has become the prey of her own emotions. Erin is an old beldame who sits by the fireside, dreaming of her youth. She ascribes her wrinkles not to inexorable time but to the aggressive behaviour of her successful brother across the Channel. Mr Fitzgerald has talked—or perhaps I should say shouted—as one of a persecuted race, but where does the persecution of Ireland stand when it is put beside the persecution of the race to which I belong? Do we seek the refuge of a narrow nationalism? Oh yes, we have our Zionists, but do not most of us regard them as feeble representatives of our race who cowed by persecution desire to throw up the struggle and revert to the primitive life from which iron circumstance had rescued them in spite of themselves? A Jew like myself who can look back over two thousand years of persecution, yes, and beyond that, has a right to feel pride in what his race has done for humanity notwithstanding or perhaps because of that incessant persecution. What has Ireland done for humanity? And when Ireland gains this illusory freedom by the blood and thunder of Mr Fitzgerald and his young friends, what will they make of it? We heard from our distinguished Irish visitor an outline of what without a sneer may be called a few neat parochial improvements; but from Mr Fitzgerald who spoke so loudly and so boldly and who was so contemptuous of his country's elected representatives we heard not a single constructive suggestion. No, sir, the Honourable Member from the Modern Sixth B lives more irrevocably in the past than the driest and

dustiest of classical scholars. Mr Fitzgerald, sir, is like a broken alarum-clock. The alarum shrills when wound up, but the hands are stationary."

Emil Stern sat down, and those who had heard his brother Julius play might have been once again reminded of him when he used to sit down at the end of a piece of music which he had felt it was not worth while for a boy of his genius to play.

"Bit unhealthy for a youngster like that to be quite so fluent," the Colonel leant over to observe to Mr Askew. "But of course these Orientals develop very early. And I didn't quite like the tone he took with his seniors, though I'm glad he sat on that young Irish bounder. Ah, I see, they're taking the vote now, I think the 'ayes' will have it. Most interesting evening. I was down at Wellington last year at a function like this; but it ran on much more ordinary lines. There's no doubt the mixture you get at a big day school makes for variety. Though it wouldn't do if it went beyond a certain point, of course. I always say you can have too much of a good thing."

"Young Stern wrote the finest set of alcaics I have had from a pupil in all my experience," Mr Askew announced in his rustiest voice.

"Did he?" the Colonel exclaimed. "Well, I'm afraid that sort of thing is rather outside my beat."

"And my colleague Harvey believes him to have the makings of the best Greek scholar ever turned out by the school."

"Interesting, most interesting. Is he any good at games?"

"I shouldn't think so."

"That's the trouble with these brainy youths. No good

at games," reflected the Colonel gloomily. "I don't know where we should be in South Africa now if our fellows hadn't learnt to play the game at school."

"Are we anywhere in particular in South Africa at the present moment?" Mr Askew turned round to ask, his leonine head wagging slowly, his eyelids twitching with extreme rapidity.

"That's pessimism," declared the Colonel, moving back from the schoolmaster as if he were infectious.

Luckily for Colonel Yarborough's equanimity the conversation was interrupted by the President's bell demanding silence for the announcement of the voting.

"That this House views with mistrust the grant of Home Rule to Ireland. For the motion forty-three votes. Against the motion seven votes. The motion is carried."

It was twenty minutes past seven. The Lent term Debate was over.

Emil Stern felt lonely as he turned out of the school building and set out along the sweeping gravel walk to catch an omnibus to High Street, Kensington, the first preliminary of the tedious journey back to Hampstead. He wished he was going to bicycle home with Ogilvie. It had been pleasant to make Fitzgerald look small; but it was not much fun to speak in favour of a motion and then vote against it. It made one feel despicably unreal, as unsubstantial in fact as a profile figure like Colonel Yarborough. Besides, his speech had only been a success because it had scored off a chap whom the other chaps

wanted to be scored off. A cheap sort of success, that. And now, he supposed, the break with Ogilvie was final. There were footsteps behind him on the gravel. He turned round, half hoping it was his friend. But it was Fane and Merivale walking arm-in-arm, walking quickly in the frore air of the March night.

"Hello, Stern, that was a very *Cicero in Catilinam* speech you made," said Fane. "But I voted against you. In fact I agreed with most of what Fitzgerald said."

The younger boy wanted to reply that he himself had voted on the same side as Fane, but he felt that would make Fane think him quite impossible. Although a few days ago he would not have minded what Fane thought, he now desired to propitiate almost anybody, and Fane seemed to him much more worth while than the majority of his fellows.

"Look here, we've had enough politics for to-night," Merivale put in. "Which way are you going, Stern?"

"I'm going to wait for a High Street bus."

The two friends passed on arm-in-arm, and left Stern to cross the road alone.

No chance of seeing Ogilvie till Monday, and when they met then they would meet no doubt as strangers. The boy boarded a red omnibus and jogged miserably along inside to High Street, reading over and over again by the flickering light of the oil-lamps the advertisement in which a leading Q.C. extolled to the lean and bearded Mr Lamplough the virtues of his Pyretic Saline.

John Ogilvie himself had been actually so much fascinated by the virtuosity of Stern's performance that, if he had not been sitting next to Edward Fitzgerald and thus been made almost painfully aware of the torment his

friend's vanity was suffering, he would have had to express his admiration and let the world of school think what it liked. It was impossible, however, when he could hear Fitzgerald vowing beneath his breath that he would wring that circumcised little bastard's neck, to congratulate the inspirer of such fury. As it was, he accepted Fitzgerald's invitation to come round to 'our place' for a while before he went home. 'Our place' was in Trelawny Road hardly more than seven minutes away from the school.

As they walked along, Ogilvie leading his bicycle in the gutter close to the kerb, Fitzgerald continued to rail at the evening.

"I suppose you think like the rest of them that I was just spouting for the sake of hearing my own voice; but I tell you, Judge, I meant every word of what I said. These damned English simply cannot understand the Irish point of view. They treat us like assassins, but in their hearts they believe we secretly look up to them. I've actually heard them argue that the last people who would welcome Home Rule would be the people of Ireland. The smug fatuous turnip-heads! And we have to thank the Nationalist Party for that. I verily believe that those sons of bitches would be staggered if Home Rule was actually offered to them. They can talk, my God, how they can talk! But if they had to act they'd be lost. You'll hear them arguing with their British friends down at the House that in spite of a few noisy extremists Ireland is fundamentally loyal to the Empire. 'Look at the Irish regiments,' they'll say. And then they'll whine for piers and post-offices, and the Chief Secretary will shower piers and post-offices round the west till there are more piers

than boats and more post-offices than letters. Thank God Gladstone *didn't* get his Home Rule Bill through, thank God Parnell *did* chase O'Shea's wife, thank God the Nationalist Party *is* a pack of jealous quarrelsome old women! Every year which goes by without getting Home Rule brings us twenty years nearer to independence."

"You really do want to be completely separated from England?" Ogilvie asked.

"As separate as Portugal from Spain or Denmark from Prussia," Fitzgerald declared.

"But surely most of the Irish don't want separation?"

"In their hearts, all of them; but so many of them are afraid it won't pay. Look at my father. He'd be counted a loyal Nationalist going over to Kerry at every election to vote against the Unionist; but his practice is in London. I'm at school in London. I shall walk a London hospital. I might just as well be a bloody Englishman."

"Well, so might I," said Ogilvie, "though I don't believe I have a drop of English blood in my veins. But you know, Fitz, I'm afraid it's too late for independence. The time for independence was before the French Revolution. There was still enough worth preserving then."

"Is it too late? It might be too late for a Scotchman. He always did take the cash and let the credit go."

"No, he didn't. What about the Forty-five?"

"Well, what about the Forty-five? That wasn't a fight for a nation's freedom. That was sucking up to Bonny Prince Charlie."

"You're a liar. You might as well call the Battle of the Boyne sucking up to James the Seventh."

"Who's he, anyway?"

"Well, James the Second, if your history is so rotten

as all that. Anyway, it was the Irish who messed up the Battle of the Boyne."

"It was not. It was the bloody French."

"Good Lord, man, what's the use of arguing with somebody who knows no history? And don't talk about 'Scotchmen'."

"To hell with history! That's just like a bloody North Briton. He feeds his emotion with dates, but he feeds his belly from English money."

Ogilvie laughed.

"Shut up, Fitz. It's no use starting a slanging match about things that happened a century or two ago. There's been enough jawing to-night."

They had reached the lamp-post at the corner of Trelawny Road by now. The grey brick houses, losing perfect definition in the acrid foggy air, ran like a line of low cliffs on either side of the road, their lighted windows seeming remote as the windows on shore beheld from the sea. When John Ogilvie looked back to this commonplace nocturne in the continuously shrinking years of the future he always saw himself and Edward Fitzgerald standing minute in a chasm of those nightmare houses which unfettered sleep builds as fast as thought; but the face of his friend so greenish white in the sad glow of the incandescent gaslight grew larger in memory, the glittering pale blue eyes more bright, the wide eloquent mouth more red, the thin fanatic nose more peaked, the cheek-bones more gaunt, until in fancy that face was suspended like a decapitated head, incarnating the will which overcame that weak body, so minute and feeble even beside the houses of everyday urban existence, the houses of men crawling between earth and heaven.

"You think I'm just jawing, Judge," Fitzgerald said. "One day you'll find that my jawing meant something. You see, I know that Ireland demands a sacrifice of blood."

"You mean by active rebellion?"

"I mean by death."

"Fitz, I believe you really would die fighting for your country."

"You don't yet understand. It's not just fighting for her that Ireland needs. It's not dying for her like the boys of '98 that Ireland needs. That's a warm way of death. I mean the cold death of the man who dies to prove himself right. I don't yet know just how I shall gain such a death, but I do know that somehow I shall gain it. Oh, hell, let's go in. If you put your bike over the railings and lean it against the surgery wall it'll be all right."

Ogilvie had already been to the Fitzgerald's house several times. The Doctor was a burly amiable man with a big beard, not unlike W. G. Grace the cricketer to look at. In spite of his size his voice was as soft as the Kerry air, and he had kept the sing-song brogue of the South-west. Probably he had never been capable of feeling so strongly about things as his son; but if he ever had, the need of building up a practice in London had long ago made him keep to himself his political beliefs. It is the exile's children who do not compromise—they either hate the place and people of their exile or surrender to them completely and forget they are aliens. Dr Fitzgerald still owned a few acres of bog and a tumbledown house on the banks of Caragh which, to Edward's resentment but to his father's relief, were let to a retired English naval captain. It was from his mother who had

been an O'Mahony that Edward inherited his fanaticism. Not that Mrs Fitzgerald was politically a fanatic. All her strength of positive feeling was expended on religion. While Edward pored over the lives of Wolfe Tone and Robert Emmett and his own namesake, Mrs Fitzgerald read the lives of the saints. While Edward bicycled to the remotest suburbs for a chance to listen to talk of Irish politics in a sympathetic ambient, his mother went wandering by herself round obscure little Catholic churches in the slums. Once Edward had the joy of actually meeting one of the old Fenians who had suffered a long term of penal servitude, and when he confided to his mother the awe he had felt in the presence of that prematurely withered little man sitting by a Dulwich fireside she responded with her experience of listening to a famous French Dominican preaching at Haverstock Hill. Yet she had been able to instil enough of her own faith into her only son to make him an observant Catholic, and she was able to comprehend sufficiently his passionate political beliefs to make her a sympathetic confidante, and at the same time to urge the worthlessness of setting Ireland free except to bring the country nearer to God.

"As near as Ireland was, avic, in the Dark Ages when there alone shone the peace of God," she used to say, her own pale blue eyes glittering.

Mrs Fitzgerald had been over thirty when she married. She was at this date fifty-four, but she looked older. Her two eldest children had died in early youth, but besides Edward she had a daughter, Ellen, now just nineteen, a buxom girl with high colour and deep laughing grey-blue eyes, offered always as a typical colleen by her father when he presented her to his patients. For some reason

which Mrs Fitzgerald had spent many hours upon her knees trying in vain to discover from the Blessed Virgin, from St Monica on whose day she had been born, and from St Catherine of Genoa for whom she had a special devotion, Ellen was determined to go on the stage. Even if Ellen had been able to demonstrate to her mother that she burned with the genius of a Duse, Mrs Fitzgerald would have thought the stage an unsuitable profession; but being unable to feel anything except an emotion of faint embarrassment when her daughter recited at home, to which embarrassment was added an acute dismay when she performed at dramatic entertainments even in aid of Catholic charities, she regarded Ellen's ambition as akin to lunacy. However, Ellen had got round her father, and she was now attending the Florence Harding School of Dramatic Art from which she hoped this very year to secure a professional engagement on tour.

On this March evening Ellen had invited a fellow-student to supper, with the intention of occupying the drawing-room afterwards in rehearsing the scenes between Rosalind and Celia in *As You Like It*, a production of which comedy was to be given by the School of Dramatic Art at the Bijou Theatre, Notting Hill Gate, after Easter.

"Ellen, my darling, I don't care for this mummery in Lent," her mother had protested.

"But, mother, it's not pleasure," Ellen had explained.

"Isn't it? It seems to me that you and this friend of yours get a great deal of pleasure out of all this attitudinizing and speechifying. Is it work you're trying to tell me it is?"

"Of course, it's work. And jolly hard work too when

we have to read the parts of Orlando and Touchstone as well as go through our own."

"I don't know about Orlando and Touchstone, but your father let out that you'd be dressed up as a boy, and that I will *not* go and shame myself by watching. I've arranged with Father Peters to make a fortnight's retreat at the Convent, which shall make such an ordeal impossible."

The Fitzgerald household was sitting down to supper when the boys came in.

"Oh, cheers," declared Ellen, "here's Ogilvie. He can read Orlando for us when we rehearse."

John Ogilvie was on the point of giving an emphatic contradiction to this assertion when he caught the eyes of Ellen's friend.

They were eyes the nearest to being black he had ever seen, and there was such a warmth of appeal in their lustrous depths that he found himself volunteering to do whatever was required of him, without considering for a moment the possibility of making an ass of himself, the most important factor in any decision John Ogilvie had to take at this stage of his life.

"You *are* a good sport," said Miss Constance Fenwick, "we shall be able to have a ripping rehearsal now. And perhaps Edward will read Touchstone."

"The hell Edward will," snapped Edward. It was clear that Fitz was immune from Miss Fenwick's dusky witcheries, and John Ogilvie found himself wondering whether thinking a girl looked like a gipsy would be considered a compliment by the girl herself. Her hair was really black, and the black lock which curled down behind her ear to the nape of her neck was bloomed like a

grape. She had a jolly good figure too. In fact she was a jolly good-looking girl, and that rich flush made her cheeks seem like peaches. No doubt people were always comparing girls' cheeks to peaches, but this girl's cheeks really were like peaches. Her teeth too were very white when she smiled, and her lips were as red as . . .

"I'd rather have it well done, thanks, Dr Fitzgerald . . ."

As red as . . . well, it was a fascinating mouth. Probably what should be called a passionate mouth. And that lightly pencilled upper lip was fascinating too . . .

"Yes, thanks, I'll take some horseradish sauce."

Yet if he had been asked before this evening whether he admired girls with the faint beginnings of a moustache . . .

"I'd rather drink beer, Dr Fitzgerald."

"And how did the debate go?" the Doctor enquired.

"I'm afraid Home Rule lost," said John quickly. "But Fitz made a ripping speech. And so did the Irish Member. At least, I thought so. But Fitz was rather down on him."

"And so did the Infant Samuel," Edward interjected.

John laughed.

"That's a good name for Stern. And nobody ever thought of it before, what's more."

On the Judge's appreciation Edward Fitzgerald began to forget his grievance against the evening, and after supper he amused himself in a corner of the drawing-room, jeering at the rehearsal. John too enjoyed the rehearsal, particularly when he found himself standing in the wrong place and Miss Constance Fenwick thought it necessary to take him by the arm and put him where he ought to be standing.

"Though I don't know why I make such a fuss," she

declared, with a raking glance at John, "because after all you will not be playing in *As You Like It*."

The possibility of going on the stage flitted across John's mind. Constance could be very little older than himself. They might yet play Romeo and Juliet together.

"You know, Mr Ogilvie, I think you'd make a better Touchstone. I think you read that last speech to Celia most awfully well," said Miss Fenwick. "I think your line is humour."

"Oh, the Judge is famous for his judicial jokes," Fitz informed her.

"Why do you call him that? Am I very dense?" asked Miss Fenwick, staring with what John considered was the most ravishing expression of perplexity he had beheld on the human countenance.

"J. P. Ogilvie. That's his nickname," Fitz explained.

John had been slightly depressed by Miss Fenwick's suggestion that his reading of the love-lorn Orlando was inferior to his delivery of Touchstone's quips; but he consoled himself by remembering that the clown was secretly in love with Celia and that Miss Fenwick was going to play Celia, not Rosalind.

"Well, you needn't call me Mr Ogilvie," was what he said.

"Call him Judge," Fitz advised.

"John is my name," the owner of it protested. He wanted no reminders from Miss Constance Fenwick that he was still at school. 'Mr Ogilvie' to be sure recognized his status, but it was distant, and distance where Miss Fenwick was concerned did not appeal to John.

At the end of the rehearsal, the hour being half-past ten,

Miss Fenwick said she must fly or her father would slaughter her. John was almost simultaneously struck with the lateness of the hour, but took care not to mention that Hampstead was his destination. He was resolved to escort Miss Fenwick to her door and did not want an argument about its being too far out of his way. Ellen Fitzgerald, who knew her friend's delight in conquest, even were her victim but a schoolboy, won John's gratitude by asking if he would mind seeing Connie home. It seemed there had been one or two unpleasant incidents of molestation in the fog lately reported to the police.

"Oh, I wouldn't dream of troubling Mr . . . John," flashed rather than said Miss Fenwick as she let him help her into a long dark-red coat with a collar of black bear-skin which deliciously brushed his cheek as she turned it up and wafted upon him a faint Oriental-seeming perfume in a fugitive breath.

John decided that his best line was action not argument. He grabbed his bowler from the hat-rack and followed Miss Fenwick resolutely down the front-door steps. For a moment he was inclined to leave his bicycle and pick it up after he had escorted her safely home, for he dreaded the effect of such a distracting encumbrance; but he was afraid that any discussion about the bicycle would prematurely reveal that he had to go as far as Hampstead, in which case Miss Fenwick might insist on seeing herself home.

"You won't mind my taking this beastly thing along, will you?"

"Why, of course. I think it's so sweet of you to bother about me."

The door of the grey corner house in Trelawny Road

had closed. They were alone with the fog and the lamp-posts and the acrid air of the London night which to John was smelling sweet as violets.

"I wonder if you know my young brother?" the girl asked. "He is at St James's."

"On the Classical side?"

"No, he's in Army C. There is a class called Army C, isn't there?"

"Oh, rather. But I don't think I know him. How old is he?"

"Let me see. Rupert is fourteen."

By Monday, John decided, he would have made himself so pleasant to Fenwick of Army C, that Fenwick of Army C, preparing for his journey through the trigonometrical wastes of the Mathematical side, would wonder how he had existed before getting to know J. P. Ogilvie of the Classical Lower Sixth.

"Is he like you to look at?"

"No, not a bit. He's got sandy hair."

Although John regretted that he would not behold the image of his sister in Fenwick of the Army C, in view of that remark about the yashmak apropos of his friendship with Stern, he was a little relieved to hear that Fenwick was not a dark beauty, and perhaps (difficult to fancy certainly of her brother) not a beauty at all.

"I'll get to know him on Monday," John promised.

"Poor Rupert will probably be rather overcome, for I suppose you are one of what he calls the 'bloods'?"

"Well, I'm only in the Second Fifteen. You see, I simply can't be bothered to think about nothing except footer."

As soon as he had said that John wished he hadn't. It

sounded sidy, as if he could get his school colours whenever he condescended to try for them seriously.

"I'm afraid I'm no use at games at all," she told him.

"Why should you be? As a matter of fact, I think girls look pretty ghastly playing games."

"That's very Early Victorian of you."

"Is it? Well, surely you don't think a girl rigged out to keep goal at hockey is a thing of beauty and a joy for ever?"

"We never play hockey at my school."

"Good for you. I say, there's a Second Fifteen match on the school ground to-morrow. We're playing one of the hospitals." Yes, thought John, and here was one of the three-quarters wandering along with a girl at a quarter to eleven, an hour or more away from bed. "I suppose you couldn't come, Miss Fenwick?"

"I might if you would be a trifle less ceremonious . . . John." She flashed a look at him from beneath her black three-cornered hat, and never did flintlock of highwayman's pistol win a more swift surrender. They were passing a lamp-post, and rather than step an inch away from that look John let his bicycle fall that he himself might keep on the pavement.

"Will you come, Connie?"

"I hope you haven't twisted the pedal?"

"Oh, bother the pedal! Will you come, Connie?"

"Well, if it's a fairly decent day and if Rupert will bring me and if you would like me to come very much, why, I'll . . . think seriously about it to-morrow."

And that was as much as John could make her promise before too soon they reached the portico of the grey house in Gladwyn Road where the Fenwicks lived.

"Do come to the match to-morrow, Connie."

"Perhaps . . . but you can come in for a moment. Father will give you a drink."

"Isn't it too late?"

"Why, it's not much after half-past ten. We never go to bed before midnight, anyway. And as a matter of fact father always likes to have a look at my young men. He's completely old-fashioned, but he's a darling. Oh, and one word of warning. Don't say anything against Jacobites."

"Against Jacobites? I'm not likely to," he said fervidly. "I'm a Jacobite myself."

The only superficial indication of Mr Fenwick's old-fashioned attitude toward the present was his wearing of a smoking-cap. He was a tall thin man with a long aristocratic face, and the drooping moustache of that dead grey to which sandy hair turns gave him a general effect of weakness. He reminded John of the conventional representations of Don Quixote. Mrs Fenwick looked many years younger than her husband, being as round and plump as he was meagre. Connie's fine features came from her father, but her gipsy air was an inheritance from Mrs Fenwick who still had jet-black hair, seeming blacker against the rice-powder with which her faded complexion was plentifully bedabbled. It was easy to see exactly what Mrs Fenwick had been twenty years ago in her elder daughter Hetty who was as dark as Connie, but ivory-pale and plump. She like her mother had her hair turned up over a comb in the Japanese style. It did not take John long to realize that Mr Fenwick had married not merely a woman much younger than himself, but one considerably beneath him socially. He could not bring himself to admit that Connie's mother was positively

common: he thought that to stamp her mentally as 'suburban' was being disloyal enough. Besides, what did it matter what so kind and hospitable and unpretentious a woman was?

"The Bonny House of Airlie, eh?" Mr Fenwick commented when his daughter introduced John Ogilvie.

"Some way back, sir, I'm afraid."

"And he's a Jacobite, father," Connie pressed upon his attention.

Mr Fenwick's dull globular eyes gleamed. Then he looked over his young visitor as if he were sizing up his worthiness to so honourable a title.

"Do you belong to one of our societies?" he asked.

"No, but I should like to," said John eagerly.

"We shall have to see about that. So you've been standing by with a prompt-book, eh? Isn't that the correct jargon? My daughter Constance is turning my house into a regular green-room, what? I feel a complete Roscius. You're not on the stage yourself?"

"No, no," said John. "As a matter of fact I'm at St James's School."

"By gad, are you? You look more than a schoolboy. But I suppose I'm judging by my boy Rupert's young friends."

John felt like shaking his host warmly by the hand and congratulating him on being one of the few people of genuine perspicacity he had hitherto met.

"Is it in order for me to offer you a whisky and soda?" Mr Fenwick continued.

"No, thanks, sir."

"But a glass of beer, eh? And I expect you smoke?"

"Oh, rather."

"You'll find these cigars very mild. Try one, won't you?"

"I'd rather smoke a cigarette, sir, if you don't mind. As a matter of fact I've got a match—a rugger match, I mean—to-morrow afternoon." John looked round. "I think Connie's going to turn up. I suppose you wouldn't care to come too, sir? We're playing a team from Bart's—from St Bartholomew's Hospital. There's not much of a squash at Second Fifteen matches."

"Ah, I don't think I dare risk standing about in this March air."

"I told you, John, that I would come if I could," Connie reminded him a little severely.

"I'd like awfully to go," said Hetty suddenly from the other end of the room.

John looked over to her, his face glowing with a warmth of affectionate gratitude. Here was a sister fit to place beside Antigone.

"Well, do come, please."

The clock on the mantelpiece chimed the first quarter after eleven. He must tear himself away.

"We shall be very glad if you will come back to tea, Mr Airlie, after the match is over," said Mrs Fenwick.

"No, no, sweetheart," said her husband, stroking his moustache and smiling courteously down at his plump little wife. "Ogilvie is our friend's name."

"But I thought you called him Airlie, Aylmer."

"Lord Airlie is the head of the Ogilvies, sweetheart."

Mrs Fenwick shook her head. Twenty-one years of married life had not made her move easily through the pageant of her husband's mind.

"You seem to have won my family in a very dashing fashion, John," Connie said to him by the front-door.

"But they were so ripping to me. Connie, you will come to-morrow?" he pressed anxiously.

"Does it matter now whether *I* come or not? You heard what Hetty said?"

"Still, I want *you* to come."

He was holding her hand in farewell.

"So much as all that?" she murmured, her eyes drowning him in their depths.

"And much much more," he breathed chokily.

Then hardly aware of what he was doing he bent over and kissed the tip of her hand.

"Happy dreams," she murmured, in that sweet low voice of hers, as the latch of the front-door clicked.

"Now, did I make a frightful ass of myself?" John demanded of his bicycle as he lighted the lamp and mounted it to ride northward through the empty night, a meaningless façade of shuttered shops and closed houses streaming past him, who seemed to himself to be motionless.

It was twenty minutes past twelve when John reached Church Row, Hampstead, and looked up a little anxiously at the light in his father's library.

Alexander Ogilvie was a successful barrister of forty-six, just about to take silk, a Common Law man with a great reputation at the Central Criminal Court for achieving the impossible on behalf of murderers and

burglars, and he had been conspicuous in one or two sensational libel cases. A practice like his did not give him the wealth of the Chancery Bar, but it had brought him into the public eye, which meant more to Alexander Ogilvie, and with the recent development of the popular press he was beginning to occupy the same kind of position as a successful actor-manager. A handsome somewhat florid man with a beautiful voice, the gift of dramatic expression, much emotional power, and plenty of solid ability, he had chosen his profession well. No man at the Bar could contemplate his future with greater equanimity.

Alexander Ogilvie's father had become the minister of one of the best-known Presbyterian churches in London after service abroad as chaplain to a Highland regiment and later as a minister in Bombay. He had married late in life Annette Boissier, the daughter of a French Protestant pastor, by whom he had three sons before she died of a fever in India. Of these the eldest son now held an important post in the Chinese Customs, the second was in the Education Office, and the third was Alexander. The old man had died some ten years before the present date, much venerated by his well-to-do congregations whose consciousness of being godly and prosperous Scots living cannily upon an inferior nation he never said a word to disturb.

In 1882, when Alexander Ogilvie was on circuit, he had met at a dinner-party during the Bodmin Assizes Athene Pendarves, the only daughter of a Cornish squire of ancient lineage renowned both as a classical and a Celtic scholar all over Europe.

She was then near the end of her twentieth year, a

dark delicate slip of a maid, who fell deeply in love with the handsome young barrister. Her father whose estate was entailed upon a second cousin managed to rake together seven thousand pounds for a dowry, so that his daughter might marry the man she wanted, for he had never denied Athene anything he could by any possible means grant her. The married couple took a little house in Westminster, which Athene made beautiful in accordance with the standards of the æsthetic movement, but where in the river mists her health languished. By the end of 1889 the growth of Alexander's practice had warranted a move up to Church Row, Hampstead, from the air of which he hoped his wife would benefit. However, a few months later Athene died, leaving her husband with John who was then just over seven years old.

It had been by Athene Ogilvie's desire that her only child had been put down for St James's. A faint flicker of dormant nationality in her husband had suggested one of the Scottish schools modelled on the English public-school idea as more suitable. His wife's death stopped that plan. It was due to her memory that John should go to the school she had chosen for him, even although the chief reason for his going there, which was not to be separated from his mother, was now tragically nullified.

So John at eight years old had entered Randell's, the preparatory school for St James's, and at twelve he had passed on from there to the great red pile on the other side of the road.

The relationship between the boy and his father had always been pleasant enough superficially, but there was

no intimacy. Alexander Ogilvie knew far better any one of those clients he had saved from a lagging at Dartmoor than he knew his son, and without exaggeration he could be said to have felt a profounder affection for the men he had saved from the gallows than he could feel for John. During the last year John's rapid development into a handsome youth of seventeen had played upon his father's jealousy, on that jealousy from which few men whose worldly success is founded upon the exploitation of personality remain free. The father could not help resenting the way his son gave the impression of thinking that his father, a man in the prime of life, belonged to an earlier epoch of humanity. He recognized how absurd it was to feel touchy over this attitude. He recognized that such an attitude was evidence not of his own age but of his son's youth. Yet he remained irritated, and his irritation took the form of stressing wherever and whenever he could the youthfulness of John, which by an easy process of self-deception he was able to suppose was the natural anxiety of a father for his son's moral welfare.

"Well, this is a good time to arrive home," said Alexander Ogilvie, looking up from the brief he was studying to note the time by the travelling-clock on his writing-table—that clock which had been his dead wife's wedding-present to him and the elfin chime of which striking the hours brought back more vividly than pictures or photograph, herself. To take this clock from the square case of crimson morocco-leather when he wound it up every week was to take her from the coffin, and in the delicate pulsations of the mechanism visible within the crystal to seem to hold once again her sentient form. And when he put back the key in the slot he

would notice the dust which would have gathered on the violet velvet lining of the leather case and remember how dust had always worried poor Athene, dust herself now.

"Where on earth have you been, my boy?"

"Well, it was the Lent term Debate, and afterwards I went back to supper with a chap called Fitzgerald. I couldn't have been back in time for dinner. I told Watson before I went to school and asked her to tell you."

"But what time did you leave your friend Fitzgerald?"

"It was after a quarter-past eleven. It's Friday. I've got all to-morrow and Sunday for my home work."

John spoke a little irritably because it annoyed him that his father's lack of sympathy should warn him to omit any mention of the Fenwicks and thus drive him into telling what practically amounted to a lie.

"Thanks, I did know what day of the week it was," said his father sarcastically. "But that's hardly the point. If you want to keep hours like this you'll have to consult me. You won't find me unreasonable, John. I realize you expect more liberty during these last two years of school, but you are still only seventeen, and you can't come in half an hour after midnight as a matter of course."

"Well, when have I done it before except after dances?" John asked in a tone of too deliberate patience to placate his father.

"We're not discussing what you've done on other evenings. We're discussing the casual way in which you ask Watson to let me know that you will not be in to dinner and then do not turn up till half-past twelve."

"It wasn't particularly casual. I told her to explain about the debate."

"Even if Watson had been able to give me your message in full, which of course she couldn't do, having no notion what a debate is, that still doesn't absolve you from being casual. Can't you see that? Why not have added that you were going to supper with this friend of yours and so might be a little late? Damn it, John, I'm the most reasonable of fathers, and should perfectly have understood."

"But I didn't know Fitz was going to ask me to supper."

"Exactly, and therefore when you accepted his invitation you should have made it clear that you would have to get away by ten at the latest."

"Well, Ellen Fitzgerald wanted me to read some Shakespeare for her."

"Oh, really? I didn't know your talents ran in that direction."

"They don't particularly, but she's acting Rosalind in *As You Like It* for the dramatic school she's at, and she wanted to practise her part," said John wearily. "I'm sorry I'm so late, but I didn't think it would matter for once on a Friday evening."

"All right, we'll say no more about it. You'd better get off to bed. Have you got a match to-morrow?"

"Yes, we're playing Bart's."

"Well, I'm doing nothing to-morrow afternoon. I might come and watch you," suggested Alexander Ogilvie, who now that John had expressed regret felt magnanimous and anxious to show him what an amount of paternal interest was at his service if he chose to avail himself of it.

"Oh, I don't think you'd better come to-morrow. It'll be a rotten match," John exclaimed, and with a hasty good night slipped from the library before his father had time to ask any more questions and make any more awkward proposals.

Alexander Ogilvie tossed aside the typewritten folios he had been studying, lit a final cigar, and settled down to read the current number of *Blackwood's*. The reminiscences of empire-builders failed to hold his attention, and remembering that he had not yet read his *Westminster Gazette* he picked up the 'sea-green incorruptible' and absorbed some of its pessimism about the conduct of the war. He supposed that if he intended to go in for politics he ought to contest a seat at the next election. Would the Tories take advantage of the more strenuous efforts now being made to face unpleasant facts in South Africa and go to the country with a 'win the war' policy? In the present condition of public hysteria they would probably sweep the polls. There was not much chance of getting anywhere as a Conservative, and after all he was a Liberal. If he fought a difficult seat at the next election he could hardly fail to get a good one at the election after. And there was bound to be a reaction. Yes, but when? And did he want a political career? Were the particular qualities which had brought him to the fore as a criminal advocate going to count for so much in the House of Commons? And did not politics always involve a man in complications from which at present he himself was mercifully free? What extraordinary beings boys were! John had evidently been quite taken aback by his suggestion to go down and see him play to-morrow afternoon. Self-conscious, of course.

But how did one become friends with one's own son? If Athene had lived she would have known how to bring it about. Perhaps he ought to have married again. The right woman would have known how to be a second mother to John. She would have kept him from regarding his father as a centenarian. These next years were going to be difficult. John would come into his mother's money at twenty-one. No time away now. He must have a serious talk with his son about the future. He would be going to the University in the October of next year. Had John really been with these Fitzgeralds to-night? Or had he been fooling around with some servant-wench? It would have been better really to send him to a boarding-school. It had been a mistaken loyalty to Athene to send him to St James's. How little he knew about John! And how little John knew about him! This relationship between father and son ought to be simple enough. There must be a great deal of himself in John. Why could he not recognize it? How did the product of a union between two people who had loved each other as well as he and Athene had loved manage to be a human creature more incomprehensible than any of the strangers he met? He could certainly recognize in John the outward features of his mother. He had her smile, her eyes. He could even recognize his own mouth and his own boyish complexion in John. But not once since John had been born had he been able to say of action or emotion or opinion, 'That's myself all over again.'

This strangeness to him made him wonder now if he had ever really understood Athene, because the strangeness could not be an effect without cause. It must be the unknown quantity in Athene. Yet, surely Athene

had loved him? That stormy April sunset of tattered cloud when they had walked home across the moors to Pendarves House, and the sudden stillness out of the wind among the rhododendrons. A blackbird had flown shrilling across the mazy path through the tangled shrubbery, and Athene had clutched his arm in affright, and a moment later he had folded her to his heart. Athene's father had understood. When they came into his study where he was reading some ragged calf-bound tome in the small circle of light cast by his green-shaded lamp, he had dropped the volume, and leaning back into the dimness beyond his lamp he had murmured, 'So, you are going to take her away from me, Ogilvie?' And Athene had run forward and kissed him and cried, 'Oh, darling, I'm afraid he must.' And the old man . . . old man? Why, he would be as old himself in another five years. . . . It was incredible. . . . Athene's father had said, 'I'm not going to claim she is all I have, Ogilvie, because the man who claims that is either a sentimental liar or an empty-headed noodle, but she *is* a very great deal, and so I think I'll open the last bottle of that port I was telling you about.'

Yes, John Pendarves must have believed that he would make Athene happy. And had not she herself pulled faintly at his hand just before the end and whispered when he leant over her, 'Such a short time, Alec, but oh, such a happy time!' Yet, *had* he known her? Had she not remained through all those eight years elusive? Had he not often felt that she never wished to hear about his cases? The first time she had come to his chambers she had looked with a shudder at the dusty volumes of legal lore and dusty blue heaps of old papers

and the cracked seals: 'I shan't come here again, Alec. I should wither up like poor Hackett.' And Hackett, his clerk, neither more nor less withered, was still with him, still behind him everywhere, impersonal as one of the leaves of the plane-trees in the Embankment gardens and slipping along behind him up the worn stone steps of the Temple, down the worn stone steps of the Temple, up the stairs of the Old Bailey, down the stairs of the Old Bailey, slipping behind him through the people waiting in that entrance hall so like a glorified urinal, slipping along like a dead leaf. Had Hackett a son? In the twenty-five years of their association he had never asked him. Had Hackett a son in whom he could perceive something of himself before he withered, before whatever moisture left to him was needed to lick the pencil with which every word spoken at those conferences was taken down? 'But, Athene, I'm a human lawyer.' 'There are only two kinds of lawyers, Alec: the ones that turn to dry sticks and the ones that grow fat on human misery. Don't grow fat, Alec, I'd prefer you to wither like poor Hackett.' He had wanted to argue with her. He had wanted to ask how they could have such a jolly little house in Westminster unless he were devoted to his profession. But it had not seemed right to argue with her. Maybe he had known in his heart that she would not be his long enough to make the slightest argument anything but a waste of the little time they still had.

The elfin chimes of the travelling-clock upon the table struck two. Alexander Ogilvie threw off his reverie, and went upstairs to bed.

John had long ago fallen asleep to thoughts of Con-

stance Fenwick, and beside his bed were the poems of Byron open at the verse which began:

*She walks in beauty like the night
Of cloudless climes and starry skies.*

The east wind began to blow at dawn, strongly enough to clear away the fog, but not strongly enough to conjure blue from the grey sky. Still, it must be considered a fine day for the time of year, John decided, when at eight o'clock he stood by the dormer-window of his room at the top of the old Georgian house and looked down across the swaying bare trees of the Hampstead gardens to the roofs and towers and chimney-tops and spires of London, seeming etched upon that fume of smoke which never, no matter how bright the weather might be, left the mighty city clear.

Surely on such a day Connie would not disappoint him. Even on the wettest Saturdays the view appeared more spacious than on other days because it was free from the menacing tedium of school or church, but on this Saturday the thought of Connie made it infinite. Surely she could not disappoint him. John hoped that the rather stodgy Second Fifteen pack would heel decently and that Williams and Gallagher, the halves, would remember that this was a three-quarters' day and not start playing ping-pong with each other. Perhaps there was rather too much wind for the most accurate kicking into touch, but the ball would be dry and the

passing should be good. He wondered if anything more would be heard of that disconcerting proposal of his father's last night to watch the match. It would be prudent to be buried in his work when his father came down to his breakfast at ten o'clock. In any case, it would be as well to get that idiotic epigram finished for Askew and as much as possible of the rest of his work done in case the Fenwicks asked him to stay on to supper. Then at lunch he could tell his father that he had had an invitation and might not be in to dinner. He would have to leave the house by half-past one to be changed in time. That would cut short the argument.

By nine o'clock John was seated at the table in the back dining-room where he always worked. The folding-doors were closed between him and the front dining-room, and more usefully between him and the view of Church Row where even the passage of a whistling errand-boy was enough to distract him from the dull task in hand. At his left hand was Lewis and Short's Latin-English Dictionary, Carey's *Gradus Ad Parnassum*, and a small volume of Martial's Epigrams Selected for the Use of Schools. Propped up against a stationery-rack was the notebook containing the idiotic verses set by Askew. It would require a deuce of a lot of padding to make eight hexameters and pentameters out of this. Sapphics would really be the most effective metre. But did Martial ever use sapphics? John turned over the pages of the chaste anthology. Oh well, if he could not find an example here, this was only a small selection. Most of Martial was too smutty for the use of schools. Instead of concentrating on Askew's arch epigram John began to concentrate on an English epigram to be entitled *On Castrat-*

ing Martial for the Use of Schools, the last two lines of which might be:

*And since the deed that wanton witty Roman
May be a poet but, alas, is no man.*

Or perhaps more neatly but less quotably:

*Cupid could not be martial without arrows,
And Martial can't be Cupid without ****s.*

John scribbled lines and bits of lines for an hour until he was reminded by the first notes of the *Poet and Peasant* overture from the German band which visited Church Row every Saturday morning at this hour that it was already ten o'clock. He heard his father come in to breakfast and, tearing up the notes for an English epigram, set out to hammer Askew's puking lines into elegiacs. An hour later when he had battered out the first two clumsy couplets his father came down from the library and put his head round the door.

"Are you working?"

"Yes, I'm trying to get a set of verses done."

"I was thinking I'd take a quick walk on the Heath before lunch. Would you care to come with me?"

John jumped up with every appearance of enthusiasm for the project. He was thinking that now he ought to be able to get the rest of the day to himself without offending his father. He could finish the verses tomorrow afternoon and do the essay in the evening—and if he did not bicycle to school on Monday morning he could do the rest of his stuff in the train.

"I didn't mean to put you off coming to the match this afternoon," he explained to his father. "But it really

won't be a good show, and I'll have to start by a quarter-past one, which would be rotten for you."

The barrister was warmed by John's attitude that morning, and the walk passed off well, for he told John stories about some of the cases he had been in and felt gratified by the intelligent questions and observations the boy made upon them.

"I wonder if you'd mind awfully if I didn't get back to dinner again to-night?" John asked as they turned out of the High Street into Church Row at the end of the walk. "A fellow on the Mathematical side called Fenwick wants me to go to tea with him, and very often when one goes to tea like that one gets asked to stay on to supper."

"Well, I'm dining out myself. So that will give the servants an evening off. But don't get back too late."

"You don't mind if I'm in by twelve?"

"No, that'll be all right."

Rummy chaps, fathers. All that fuss about last night, and now as mild as you like. Things were going well to-day.

Things did not go so well when John took the field with the rest of the Second Fifteen and sought anxiously among the sprinkling of spectators along the ropes for a glimpse of Connie. There was not a sign of her. This preoccupied him so much that when the Bart's centre-forward kicked off and sent the ball spinning toward him he failed to gather it properly and the ensuing rush by the hospital forwards ended in a try against the School.

"Good god almighty, Ogilvie," growled the Captain in the line up. "Haven't you had your afternoon nap yet?"

"Sorry, Hopkinson. Something got in my eye."

'Something did not get in my eye' would have been more correct, John thought, and he could not help smiling to himself.

"It's nothing to grin about, you slack ass," Hopkinson snapped.

Just then the Bart's half set the ball down from the place kick, which went wide. Usually John was given the drop out from the twenty-five; but Hopkinson marked his displeasure by flinging the ball to one of the halves. Five minutes later, as Williams put the ball into a scrum half-way between the Bart's twenty-five and the centre of the field, John saw a dark-red coat walking across the stretch of green behind the Bart's goal. "Heel, School, heel! For the love of God, heel! Heel! Heel, School!" Williams was imploring in a voice of agonized entreaty. And the clumsy Second Fifteen pack managed to heel out cleanly. Williams swung the ball to Gallagher; Gallagher swung the ball along to John. John saw the dark-red coat behind the Bart's goal and shot through between the Bart's centre three-quarters. The Bart's full-back dived for his legs. John, his eyes fixed on the dark-red coat, leapt in the air like a stag to avoid the back's grip, and a moment later he touched down between the posts. As he walked away from the ball he threw one glance over his shoulder in the direction of Connie. He was hoping that she understood enough about rugger to grasp that he had scored a pretty decent try.

At half-time, while the reeking forwards were lying about sucking slices of lemon, John, who had scored another good try just before the whistle blew, now took the risk of being accused of side by walking over to the touch-line to greet Connie and Hetty and the noticeably

awed Rupert, who had not expected to be addressed by a member of the Second Fifteen for many long weary terms to come.

"I'll change as quickly as I can if you walk slowly on," he said as the whistle blew for the second half. "I'll catch you up before you're half-way down Baron's Court Road."

The match ended in a victory for the visitors; but John never cheered more heartily as the member of a defeated team.

"You played damned well, Judge," said Hopkinson as they were crossing the gravel to the changing-room. "But I thought you had the jim-jams when you started."

John had been optimistic in calculating that he could change fast enough to overtake the Fenwicks half-way along Baron's Court Road. For all his furious pedalling they were back home in Gladwyn Road when he saw them again. Hopkinson would have supposed that John had had another severe attack of the jim-jams if he had been present when Hetty, in answer to his restless glances toward the door of the dining-room, told him that Connie had had to go out to visit some friends after the match. A sick disappointment clutched his heart, and in the confusion of his mind he barely managed to avoid asking if she would be back for supper before he realized that he himself had not yet been invited to stay for supper and that he did not even know whether the Fenwicks had dinner or supper in the evening. Fortunately Mr Fenwick began to talk about Legitimists and the rapidly degenerating condition of Europe consequent upon tampering with the monarchical idea. In a few minutes John was sufficiently himself again to recognize

that he was eating exceptionally good strawberry jam and that he was hungry. Nevertheless he could not have succeeded in hiding his disappointment completely, because Hetty found an opportunity to take him aside after tea and tell him that Connie was really quite upset at missing him, but that she had forgotten about this previous engagement, which, as she was going to meet an actor who might be useful to her, had to be kept.

"When will she be back?"

"Oh, not till late. She's gone over to Richmond for the evening."

John felt as if the ceiling of the room was resting on his head.

"But next Saturday if you're free there's a meeting here for the supporters of father's throneless monarchs, to which he's going to invite you, and Connie thought we might go to Olympia afterwards to see Barnum's show if you are free."

"That would be ripping."

"Why don't you go up and have a talk with father? He took rather a fancy to you."

Mr Fenwick was to impress himself on John's mind and remain in his memory for years as the perfect type of romantic ineffectiveness, and when his own later development was to lead him to analyse early impressions and influences he was inclined to lay a greater responsibility on Mr Fenwick for the desertion by himself of his youthful beliefs than was merited. He would forget that before he met Connie's father his friend Fitzgerald's fanatical nationalism had already made his own Jacobitism appear as anaemic and as affectedly archaic as the women of Burne-Jones. Still, the incarnate warning that Mr

Fenwick offered of the results of dreaming about a lost cause without the slightest intention of taking any practical steps to give it a contemporary importance undoubtedly did affect John. As soon as he reached the stage of being irritated by the fatuity of merely ritual observances, like laying wreaths at the base of the equestrian statue of Charles I and drinking the health of Queen Mary IV across a finger-bowl of water, he flung away with the ritual the faith which produced it, because for him the substance of things hoped for had dissolved like a rose-dyed morning mist and the only evidence of things not seen was a sentiment that soon cloyed intolerably.

"You know, I grew to feel so strongly about Legitimism," Mr Fenwick told John this afternoon when he noticed him looking at a painting of himself as a very young man in the uniform of a yeomanry dragoon, "that I resigned my commission in the Cumberland Dragoons. Besides, I ask you," he went on, with a delicate gesture of his slim white hands, "a Cumberland Dragoon!"

It was not much to sacrifice for a cause, John thought even so early as that afternoon, and looking again at the uniformed figure he perceived the essential weakness which that heavy moustache all young men seemed able to grow once upon a time could not hide.

"We saw come marching o'er the knowes,
Five hundred Fenwicks in a flock—
With jack and speir, and bowes all bent,
And warlike weapons at their will,"

quoted this contemporary member of the brood called

fierce and fearless Fenwicks; and because he was Connie's father John tried to feel that the quotation was not embarrassing. Presently Mr Fenwick lifted the glass top of a table to take out a heart-shaped locket.

"The Prince's hair," he told his visitor as he opened it and showed a chestnut-brown lock which glinted in a sudden radiance of the setting sun. This relic brought a lump to John's throat. Criticism was for a while forgotten. "And here is a piece of embroidery worked by the Queen of Scots during her imprisonment. And here is a crucifix which belonged to young Kinlochmoidart. He gave it to an ancestor of mine who was able to do him some small service before he was martyred at Carlisle. And here is a coral that belonged to the White Rose Prince of Wales when he was a baby. But come along and sit down and have a smoke. These relics are too melancholy."

When Mr Fenwick pressed on John one of those mild cigars he had recommended, he felt bound to accept it. He could scarcely be criticizing to himself his host's weakness and then funk one of his cigars. To his relief he found he was able to smoke it without a hint of discomfort.

"I want you to come along next Saturday," his host was telling him. "We've got a meeting of the West London Legitimist League, and I'll propose you as a member. An American Episcopalian parson is going to read us a paper on the attitude of American Jacobites to the Revolution. It is usually stated by prejudiced historians that all emigrant Scots helped the Hanoverians, but it would appear that this was by no means true of all of them. There were many Jacobites who fought on the side of Independence. It has always been something

of a puzzle to the members of the Legitimist League to know what attitude the League should adopt towards the United States. Personally, I have always been in favour of recognition, because to rebel against rebels seems to me a logical impossibility. Many of the League members prefer to regard the United States as revolted colonies and refuse to acknowledge them as a sovereign state. Moreover, and this I admit is the great obstacle to recognition, many of our own members have such a horror of republicanism in any shape or form that they dread the effect of recognizing a republic. There is a great deal to be said for their attitude because we must remember that our belief in the divine right of monarchs is not merely a sentiment, it is also . . ." Mr Fenwick paused.

John leaned forward eagerly.

"It is also a philosophy; in fact I could practically call it an article of our religion."

"Would you die for it?" the boy asked.

"Die for it? Why, I hope that if the opportunity were given to me I should be granted the courage," Mr Fenwick replied. "But I'm afraid that in these degenerate days the opportunity will not be given. I have no illusions, Ogilvie. I do not suppose for an instant that there is the faintest hope of restoring the rightful line to the throne of Great Britain and Ireland."

John was silent. He was thinking of Edward Fitzgerald's face in the light of the lamp-post yesterday evening. He was wanting to ask Mr Fenwick what was the value of a profound conviction about something which had no relation to the world of to-day.

Mr Fenwick answered his unspoken question.

"I disregard the criticism levelled against us by the average man that we are not practical," he said. "I consider that we are preserving an attitude toward life which would otherwise be lost. So long as we guard and tend the flame, however dimly it may burn, it is still living fire. The world may yet require that flame for a great furnace. Republicanism may have seemed outworn when Brutus died. Imperialism may have seemed finished when Rome fell. Government in the future may show us political experiments undreamed of hitherto. Those experiments may succeed. It is equally probable that they will outlive their utility. We may have to retrace our steps. Moreover, the immortality of an idea is one of the assurances granted to humanity of the immortality of the soul. How old are you? Ah, yes, well, I'm just forty-three years older than you, and when you reach my age you'll find that death is your next-door neighbour, and an obtrusive one . . . yes, death, whom at present you can hardly fancy in the same world as yourself."

As Mr Fenwick spoke these last words he shook a long forefinger at his young guest, and John who was not usually macabre saw it for a moment as the fleshless finger of a skeleton.

"I suppose," Mr Fenwick continued meditatively, "that people of ancient family like myself are always more sharply aware of death. The consciousness of succession is never lulled to sleep. The man who scarcely knows who his grandfather was often has a kind of animal innocence about first and last things. That is why in these democratic days capital punishment is so ridiculous. How can the threat of death deter a man who lives from moment to moment? You mustn't misunder-

stand me when I cite the present fever of the mob to enlist for the South African War. Not one of these khaki warriors believes that *he* may be killed by a Boer bullet."

"I rather wanted to enlist myself," said John, who was anxious not to present himself to Connie's father in a false light.

"And why? For the sake of the adventure, eh?"

"Well, to get away from school really."

"That is only another way of saying the same thing. I don't blame you. School is a foretaste of the world modern man has created for himself. Yet how many of those who fought for the King against the Parliament, for the King against Cromwell, for the King against the Dutch usurper, for the King against the Hanoverian usurper, fought for the sake of escaping from the *taedium vitae* which is the inevitable accompaniment of material progress? You wouldn't enlist for South Africa because you believe that the Transvaal and the Orange Free State should be coloured red in the map of the world?"

"No, it's very odd. I don't think that most of the intelligent people of my age believe in the least that the British Empire is a good thing in itself. But I mustn't say that. Askew, my form-master, cursed me like anything for writing about 'things in themselves' in an essay. Still, you know what I mean. Yet they can't see anything better than the British Empire at the moment, and so they get into the habit of thinking that there must be something in it. Besides, it's too late to do anything about it. That's really what I feel. You see, every side I've cared about in history has lost. Cray, one of my form-masters, used to call me a minority man. I re-

member he once set me a piece of Greek prose about a sophist who argued that the majority must be wrong because most men are fools. He argued so well that when the vote was taken he had carried all his audience except one man, who at once pointed out that according to the sophist the minority must be right and that therefore the sophist's contention was wrong. . . ."

John suddenly noticed that Mr Fenwick was nodding. He jumped up in some confusion:

"I'm afraid I shall have to be going now, sir. I'm looking forward to Saturday."

"Yes, well, we'll make you a member of the League. At any rate, you won't find many majority men members, though I won't guarantee you against a complete absence of fools."

Mrs Fenwick came into the room as her husband was speaking.

"Why, hullo, sweetheart, there you are," he exclaimed, affection warming that coldly correct voice.

It did not occur to John in the state of his own emotion over Mrs Fenwick's younger daughter to be astonished at the regard in which the melancholy aristocrat so obviously held his plump common little wife. As Connie's mother he desired to find her perfect. Yet the explanation was easy enough. Aylmer Fenwick at forty had married the daughter of a roundabout proprietor whom he had met during a walking tour in the footsteps of the fugitive king Charles II. That her father was half a gipsy mattered nothing. She was twenty-two years younger than himself and she loved him. Like many a marriage of such disparity it was happy because the man had sacrificed his prejudices for love. Aylmer Fenwick

beheld Margaret Gandy as she was. It was only he who had seemed to grow old, and that she should love him now at sixty was still a marvel at which he never ceased to wonder. She let him put her right in small matters as sweetly now as when she was a shy girl in the strange surroundings of her married life, so unimaginable to a wanderer from fair to fair. It was true that Aylmer Fenwick's Legitimist creed never managed to rise above the level of eccentricity, that the expression of his beliefs appeared to consist of forms and ceremonies, and that his family regarded him as a lovable dreamer; but it was impossible to cross the threshold of that house in Gladwyn Road without recognizing that the rooms were larger merely because he moved about them. Therein lay for awhile his influence on John. If such a man could discover no practical expression for his uncompromising beliefs, how should anybody succeed?

It was about half-past seven when John reached Hampstead and decided to devote his evening to the essay set by Askew. There was a slight argument with the domestic staff about the unreasonableness of young gentlemen who announced they would be out to dinner and then came back expecting to find it obtainable at a moment's notice.

"You really are aggravating, Master John," said Watson, the elderly parlour-maid. "Your father particularly said me and Cook was to take the evening off if we would like it. Only as it happened I wasn't feeling

none too well, and so I let one of the girls go out instead."

"Well, it's all right, Watson. I only want some bread and cheese," John declared.

"Yes, I dare say, only want some bread and cheese; and Cook wouldn't have nothing to say about it, would she, if I was only to give you bread and cheese? Really, Master John, I say to myself sometimes that it's younger you're growing instead of older every day. Well, you'll just have to wait while I see what Janet and me can find. And me just settled down with the first chance I've had to look at my *Church Times*, since yesterday, and early service to-morrow morning and all, when I do like to spend a quiet peaceable evening."

"Look here, Watson, if you keep on jawing I'll go out and eat a fourpenny vanilla ice for supper."

"You'll do no such a thing, freezing your stomach in this starving east wind with vanillar ices. Whoever heard the likes?"

In spite of her grumbling Watson managed to give John some of his favourite dishes that evening.

"And which," she observed to Janet, the between-maid, "Cook takes a regular pleasure in not giving him for all me for ever telling her what he likes best."

John found the back dining-room uninspiring for the comparison he had to make of the treatment of love by the Roman poets with the treatment of it by the romantic poets of the nineteenth century. It might have seemed easier before he met Connie.

"Good lord, only just twenty-four hours ago!" he ejaculated.

Then he fell into a trance of regret for the disappoint-

ment of this evening, from which he rescued himself by going up to his own room at the top of the house and mooning out of the open window at the tawny glow of the London sky, beneath which Connie would be sleeping in another few hours. Damn this essay. And yet no. Why damn this essay? The subject was love. Thinking it over, he could not recall such a sensible subject from Askew. A damned sight more sensible than comparing the tactics of the Macedonian phalanx with the tactics of the Roman legion about his efforts to establish which Askew had tried to be funny last Tuesday morning. John lit the gas, and noted on a sheet of paper:

<i>Lesbia</i>	<i>Catullus</i>
<i>Cynthia</i>	<i>Propertius</i>
<i>Delia</i>	<i>Tibullus</i>
<i>Lalage</i>	<i>Horace</i>
<i>Lydia</i>	<i>Horace</i>
<i>Dido</i>	<i>Vergil</i>
<i>Ars Amatoria</i>	<i>Ovid</i>

The grossly cynical view of the tender passion(?) which the large-nosed Roman poet, who was exiled by the Emperor Octavius for a discreditable intrigue with his sister? sister-in-law? daughter? daughter-in-law? is repugnant to our modern taste. We cannot believe that Ovid knew what true love(?) or romantic love(?) or love(?) was. We remember his advice to the spectator at the games to drop his ticket(?) in order to have an excuse for bending down to catch a glimpse of the comely thigh of the lady sitting in front of him.

Perhaps Askew would object to that, better put

ankle, though Ovid wrote 'thigh' . . . and we compare that with Tennyson's exquisite picture of Maud's airy tread.

<i>Maud</i>	<i>Tennyson</i>
<i>Fanny Brawne</i>	<i>Keats</i>
<i>The Maid of Athens</i>	<i>Byron</i>

'By those wild eyes like the roe.' Damned good, that. 'By those lids whose jetty fringe kiss thy soft cheeks' blooming tinge?" By gad, how damned good! One could fancy that Byron had been evoking Connie herself. 'She walks in beauty, like the night of cloudless climes and starry skies; and all that's best of dark and bright meet in her aspect and her eyes.' Absolutely Byron might have seen Connie.

When we compare the noble lines of the poet Byron in celebration of the most ideal type of womanhood with . . .

With what? It might be rash to start moral comparisons where Byron was concerned. Old Askew had probably read *Don Juan*, and would have something to say about *Donna Julia*. . . .

The essayist decided it was time to go down to the library and check his references. By the time his father came home at a quarter to one he had covered ten pages of foolscap with quotations from the poets and a number of those heavy pronouncements in the first person plural with which the schoolboys of a generation ago, in whom originality was not encouraged, were wont to release their conventional opinions with the solemnity of Papal bulls.

"I hope you don't mind my swotting in your library?" said John. "But I kept wanting books. I was writing my essay."

"Did you enjoy your evening?" his father asked.

"Well, as a matter of fact I made a mistake. It was next Saturday I was invited to supper. But Watson got me some grub. I've been working on this essay all the evening."

"What was the subject?"

"Love."

"These modern schoolmasters are a queer lot," observed the barrister. "What a subject for a schoolboy! You must have been able to make a very valuable contribution to the literature of the passions."

John felt embarrassed.

"It wasn't just love. It was a comparison between the treatment of love by the Latin poets and modern poets. We had the same kind of thing about scenery."

"I see. Just an excuse to trot out quotations."

"Yes."

"How did the match go?"

"We were beaten. They had rather a beefy lot of forwards. I got two tries."

"Good. I suppose you'll be in the First Fifteen next year?"

"I suppose I shall have a decent chance," John agreed without enthusiasm. He did not enjoy being reminded of what steppes of times still stretched between him and release from marching along those monotonous parasangs of school. He wondered what his father would say if he were to announce he had made up his mind to be an actor and wished to attend the Florence Harding School of Dramatic Art. Have a fit probably. Suddenly there came over John a passionate desire for the company of Mrs Stern. Strengthened by the consciousness of being in

love with Connie, he did not care what people said about him and Stern. They could think what they liked. He had treated Stern rather rottenly. To-morrow afternoon he would call round and ask Stern to wait for him at the corner as usual on Monday morning.

John's self-reproach was not idle. Miriam Stern had been worried about Emil's state of utter dejection when he reached home after the debate. All her life she had been trying to administer balm to wounded minds. It had begun with her father who, having been a moderately successful portrait-painter in Warsaw, had begun to believe himself a Velasquez denied recognition because he was a Jew, and who when Miriam was fourteen had removed his family to England under the conviction that a country with a Jewish Prime Minister would accord him the honour, the fame, and the material prosperity Poland refused him. In England the painter had found no suggestion of persecution; but what was worse a blank bourgeois indifference which wounded him more deeply. Miriam Stern could shudder still at the memory of those black fogs of twenty years ago, when the air was creeping like a hooded death into the half-furnished Notting Hill house, and when her mother would send her up the echoing uncarpeted stairs to light the gas for her father in the studio, if he *must* banish himself from the only warm room in the house, which was the kitchen in the basement. Miriam would find him sitting with bowed head on the sitters' chair which sitters so seldom occupied. She would see the windows like blind eyes, and beyond them the dim fulvous oblongs of gaslight in the backs of the houses opposite, across which the shadows of human beings, incredibly alive, made phantom gestures. One

day, out of sheer despair to find a word of hope for this bowed figure of hopelessness, she had sung to him an old folk-song of Central Europe, and when he had gathered her to him in the silence that succeeded she had supposed that this singing to him in the foggy twilight was a sure consolation; but once on a dark November afternoon, coming upstairs like that to minister to his gloom, she had found the canvas on which he was working slashed to ribbons and beneath the dust-sheet with which he was wont to cover it the dead body of the painter, his throat slashed too.

And then there had been her brother Jan the revolutionary, for ever holding forth about the wrongs of the poor and downtrodden, and requiring from his sister the ceaseless tribute of sympathetic attention. The end of Jan had been Siberia, escape, and death from starvation and exposure.

And then there had been Ernest her husband, with enough music in him to make him despise his father's business, with enough music in him to make him dream of being for Jewry what Mendelssohn had failed to be, with enough music in him to play the second violin in the Philharmonic, but no more music than that. He had not lived even long enough to enjoy the brief triumph of his son Julius, merely long enough to reproach his wife for transferring to the children all the devoted love she had once felt for him, and to them all the passionate belief she had once held in his genius.

And then there was poor little Julius, suddenly deprived by the doctors of the feverish concert-platform life which was the only reality in his childish existence. She had had to console him first for the imagined coldness of

audiences, and she must try to console him now by being his only audience when sometimes, his great eyes burning, his eyebrows meeting in a tragic scowl, he would play one of those Bach Partitas, for the performance of which he had been extolled as high as the angels. Even during his brief career Julius had earned enough money for his family to live in comfort and indulge in the unobtrusive beauty by which his mother set such store. Julius was like a forsaken bride who will not doff her bridal gown, for he insisted always upon dressing himself as if he were going to play in public. His mother often wondered whether it would not be kinder to let him play out his life on the concert-platform instead of keeping him miserable on the chance of returning health. She was not a woman who feared the world's opinion in most things; but she did shrink from exposing herself to the accusation that she had sacrificed her prodigy of a son for personal gain.

Now here was Emil, whose debonair indifference to the world had been such a joyful relief, falling into dejection like the others.

"My dearest boy, what has happened to you?"

And when he told her about Ogilvie and Fitzgerald and the speech he made and the loneliness he felt for the first time her maternal pride rejoiced in the security of the confidence that came from her son's frankness.

"I don't believe Ogilvie meant to hurt your feelings, beloved Emil."

"Oh, yes, he did. He meant to show me that I was a Jew, and that I was not to forget it."

Miriam Stern heard again her father's voice in that bitter complaint.

"Indeed, Emil, I think till you are more perfectly sure there has not been some foolish misunderstanding you ought to give Ogilvie the credit of being superior to that kind of attitude. You will see that I am right."

"You don't know what these idiotic boys at an English public school are like," he exclaimed contemptuously. "Silly ignorant little bourgeois with the minds of savages!"

"Why don't you ask Ogilvie to tea with you on Sunday? We could send a note by Ethel if you don't want to go to his house."

"I'd sooner die!" Emil declared, cheeks and lips white.

This conversation had taken place on Friday evening. On Sunday afternoon when Emil still in a mood of profound dejection was sitting by the fire in the grey room with the sea-green velvet curtains, his mother had come in, looking so young and merry, to say that Ogilvie was taking off his coat down in the hall.

"You asked him to come," he accused her, tremulous with anger.

"No, no, Emil love, he came entirely of his own accord."

It may have been John's preoccupation with the fancy of the girl with whom he had fallen in love since he had last seen Mrs Stern which transmitted itself in emotion to her mind, for with an inward frown at herself Miriam Stern beheld her son's friend no longer as a schoolboy when he came into her grey drawing-room this afternoon, smiling that sidelong smile in shyness, nutbrown hair ruffled, eyes questioning, cheeks flushed like a girl's from hurrying through the wind. She clutched at the corsage of her dress of black chiffon-velvet as if she would pluck from her heart that which had set it suddenly

beating; and as she made the gesture she looked quickly round at Emil to discover if he was aware that his mother was not much more proof than other women against the supposed folly of womanhood. Emil, however, thought she looked at him to urge his own folly.

"Let's go down to my room," he said to Ogilvie.

"It will be tea-time in half an hour," Mrs Stern reminded the boys, putting into her voice so much prim maternal pedagogy in an effort to set John Ogilvie back where he had been until this afternoon that John himself asked Emil in dismay, as they went downstairs to Emil's little room at the back of the house, whether he had done anything to annoy his mother.

"She isn't annoyed with you. But I think she thought you and I had quarrelled."

Emil bit his lips in a rage with himself for using so feminine a word. He deserved now whatever cold piece of sarcasm he got from Ogilvie. John, however, during the last two days had become a good deal less sensitive to emotional turns of speech from others. To Emil's astonishment and exultation he felt his arm gripped.

"I'm sorry I treated you rather rottenly, but somebody said something about you and me which bored me. . . ."

"Fitzgerald!" exclaimed the younger boy.

"No, no, he said nothing . . . oh, that's why you were so ikey to him at the debate!"

"Ikey!" repeated Emil bitterly. "Why not Ikey Moses?"

"No, that wasn't the best word to use in the circumstances," John laughed. "Never mind, Emil, you know I wasn't trying to be objectionable."

It was the first time Ogilvie had called him by his

first name. In that moment the unhappiness of the misunderstanding was forgotten.

"I thought Fitzgerald had said something about your going round so much with a Jew."

John shook his head.

"He said nothing. But he's rather fed up with you now after that speech."

They had already reached Emil's little room and were sitting on either side of the gasfire. Above the mantelpiece hung a small painting by Emil's grandfather. Four men in black cloaks were sitting with heads close together at a table, reading some document by the light of a candle. A young woman who was coming toward them with a tray of food had paused to listen anxiously by the door, and an old woman in the background was blowing up the fire with a pair of bellows. *Poland 1863*, read the legend on the frame. That had been the year of the last insurrection against the Russian tyranny.

"My grandfather was a Jew," Emil explained, "but he was none the less in sympathy with Polish freedom for all that. Yet he had to leave the country because as a Jew he stood no chance of fair treatment. So I always get exasperated when these Irish and Polish patriots talk as if they were the only nations that knew what it was to be under the yoke of a conqueror. As a matter of fact I voted against my own speech, because I believe that imperialism is more dangerous to the world than nationalism. We might reach internationalism if once national aspirations were satisfied, but imperialism can only mean war, and war on a grand scale, too."

"You know, it's queer to listen to you and Fitzgerald," observed John. "Here we are all three of us at school

with a crowd of people whose lives will never be more exciting than they are at present, and to hear you both talk you would think that they were seething with revolution."

"But can't you realize that the world must blow up fairly soon? You surely don't think that this weary dreary end of an epoch is going to drag on for ever? Wait till Victoria and Franz Josef die, and after them will come the deluge."

'They might live to a hundred,' John suggested.

"Even if they do, this state of mind can't go on."

"But it is a deadly dull time in history," John insisted. "There's something pathetic about the way people have worked themselves up over this war in South Africa. Why, I was wanting to enlist in the Imperial Yeomanry until . . ." he stopped himself. Emil had a way of getting more out of you than you meant to say, and with all his brains he was too much of a kid to understand about falling in love with a girl like Connie.

"Until what?" Emil pressed.

"Oh, until I got disgusted by all this tin-trumpet patriotism. Put a penny in my tambourine for a gentleman in khaki going south! My god, it's the assumed jolly-good-fellow attitude which I hate. We'll call the poor — a gentleman, and that'll buck him up no end. Do you suppose that a fellow like Kipling really believes all this rot he writes about the Empire?"

"Doesn't a kid banging on a drum believe he's a real soldier?" the younger boy asked.

"I say, Emil," John went on, "it must sometimes make you laugh when you see the way the English have appropriated militant Judaism, lock, stock and barrel. I

wonder they haven't invented a Maccabees tartan. All this God of our fathers business in Kipling, and a sort of mock-modest attitude over being the Chosen People. I suppose it was that filthy swine Cromwell who started it. You may laugh at the Irish, but they *are* men of the West. Not pseudo-Orientals like the English and the Germans. I wish you and Fitzgerald could get on. I'd like to hear you argue with him."

"I could as soon argue with a gorilla," declared Emil. "He's not civilized. At any rate, the English are civilized."

"Yes, you think that because they've absorbed so much of the Jewish point of view," said John. "Disraeli is the Moses of modern England."

"Disraeli!" Emil scoffed. "Why not Lyons, or Salmon and Gluckstein?"

The discussion was closed by Mrs Stern calling the boys to tea, and after tea Julius played the Bach Partita in D minor that has the famous chaconne, weaving what John thought the most incomprehensible pattern of sound to which he had ever listened. Yet there sat the brother and mother of the player lost to everything except his music. What a barrier music raised between those who appreciated it and those who did not! How could one draw near to people who were able to seclude themselves instantly in this impenetrable thicket of sound? John tried to escape from the prickly maze of notes into the dream world where Connie could be conjured up immediately; but the inconsistency of the violin distracted him. Twang! Twang! How was it possible to enjoy this relentless tangle of sound? But they were enjoying it. Emil's mouth looked as if he were kissing invisible

celestial beings. And Mrs Stern's eyes were beholding visions of beauty to him incomunicable.

"I must look to these people like a cold dumpling on a plate," John thought.

Presently Mrs Stern turned to see how he was enjoying the Partita, and when she cast upon him her dark eyes a brightness rimmed them like moonlight round the edge of a cloud. John was seized with a surprising desire to sit on a footstool at her feet and lay his head in her lap. It was seeming to him that to rest his cheek upon that black velvet dress would be the very perfection of repose. The first impression he had had of her in this room came back to him. Why after all had he been drawn here this afternoon? Was it not to escape from the coldness of his father's house? If his mother had lived he might not have felt lost in music like this. He could remember the way he used to love sitting on a footstool, with his ear to the vibrating leg of the piano while his mother played—what? Which of those pieces of music that still stood piled upon one another in the piano-stool, her name written finely in fading ink upon every one of them? Always Athene Pendarves . . . never Athene Ogilvie. After she married she must have bought no more music. No doubt his father had been as hopelessly lost in the tangle of her notes as he himself was now in this pattern woven by Julius Stern. Mrs Stern was smiling as if to tell him that she knew his thoughts, and to smile back at her was like the acknowledgment of a secret between them. Never again would he behave so rottenly to Emil. It was time to free himself from the absurd tyranny of public-school behaviour. What on earth did it matter what his fellows thought? They were herrings in a shoal with but

one ambition among them, and that was to conform to the shoal's standard.

Julius had stopped. He was now sitting huddled on a footstool in a far corner of the room, to frown over mistakes he thought he had made. An uncanny sort of kid.

"What were you thinking about, John?" Mrs Stern asked.

"I was thinking I wished I didn't feel such a frightful dolt when good music was being played."

"But you looked as if you were walking in a magic garden," she assured him.

"Did I? Well, I was thinking of when my mother was alive. She used to play a lot. I was looking at her music the other day, and most of it was by Schumann."

"He once had the impudence to write a piano accompaniment for the Partita I played," said Julius sternly. "And he couldn't write for the violin at all."

"But John's mother probably did not play the violin, and Schumann wrote most beautifully for the piano, Julius. I expect she used to play the *Kinderscenen* for him."

Mrs Stern went across to the piano and played a short piece in which John was extremely gratified to find that he could detect something like the suggestion of a tune.

"That's *Traümerei*," Mrs Stern told him. "It's supposed to be a little child dreaming by the fireside."

Julius jumped up, and played the melody over again on his violin, with the astonishing effect on John of making him feel on the verge of bursting into tears.

"Why, John, you are much more susceptible to music

than you pretend. You will have to come with us the next time we go to the Queen's Hall."

"I should love to, Mrs Stern."

Presently Emil was asking him if he had done the essay for to-morrow, and was evidently anxious that John should retire with him to his room to read his own contribution.

"And you'll stay on to supper with us?" Mrs Stern asked.

John would have been overjoyed to accept this invitation, but he was afraid of a fuss with his father which might end in his not getting next Saturday evening, and told her that he was expected home.

"There's my essay," said Emil, pushing the sheets of foolscap across to his friend and watching him while he read it.

"But, I say, Emil, you can't hand this in," John expostulated when he had finished. "You simply can't, my dear chap. You'll shock Askew into fits."

"He asked for a comparison. I've given him one."

"Yes, but . . . but you can't write these things down in a school essay."

"He asked for a comparison," Emil repeated obstinately. "The only comparison worth making is between the love that was recognized by the Romans and the love that is recognized by the poets of the nineteenth century. The best love poetry in Latin is about boys, except of course for Propertius and the *Pervigilium Veneris* and one or two poems of Catullus. Horace is conventional about his plump ladies. So really is Tibullus about his Delia. But when he is writing about boys he writes poetry. '*O fuge te tenerae puerorum credere turbae;*' that is written from the heart. And so is, '*Eheu quam*

Marathus lento me torquet amore!" Even Virgil never evokes the beat of physical desire unless he is writing about boys."

"But you can't say so in a school essay," John insisted.

"I should have thought that was the most appropriate medium to choose," said Emil. "*Formosum pastor Corydon ardebat Alexim* is a living line even at St James's. What does *Come into the garden, Maud*, mean for schoolboys except a skivvy's giggle?"

"There are other lines than that to quote," argued John. "*Rose Aylmer, whom these watchful eyes may weep, but never see. A night of memories and sighs I consecrate to thee.*"

Emil laughed.

"To some boy perhaps, but not to Rose Aylmer."

"As a matter of fact," said John severely, "I fell madly in love with a girl on Friday night."

Emil turned pale.

"With a girl? What girl?"

"A girl I met."

"How old is she?"

"Eighteen."

"That won't last very long. Girls of eighteen don't fall madly in love with youths of seventeen."

"Then according to you I ought to be falling in love with some damned kid in the Lower Third?"

"I didn't say that; but it wouldn't be as ridiculous as falling in love with a girl of eighteen."

"Look here, Emil, I'm very fond of you, but if you're going to sneer . . ."

"I'm not sneering," said the younger boy quickly. "You see, you don't understand the effect you have."

"It must be something damned unpleasant to judge by my effect on you."

"It's not, it's not!" cried Emil passionately. "But don't let's talk about it any more, because I don't want you to feel I'm a kind of responsibility. I'm sorry I seemed to sneer about this girl. It's really because I should hate her to hurt you. Look here, to show I'm sorry . . ." he tore up the foolscap sheets on which the essay was written and threw them into the paper-basket. "I'll sit down after supper and write a good little schoolboy's essay without a hint of reality in it."

"Look here, I don't think you ought to work yourself up like this," John remonstrated.

"But you've been consecrating nights of memories and sighs to this . . . to your ladylove."

"You're younger than I am."

"I won't make the obvious retort."

"Look at yourself. In Etons!" John exclaimed, shocked by the tension of the emotional atmosphere. "You look even more of a kid than you are. In fact if you want to know why I was dodging you rather last week, it was because some of the chaps suggested that you and I were having an affair."

"What a ghastly suggestion!"

"It had never struck me that people could think that."

"Yes, mixed marriages *are* revolting," Emil assented bitterly. "But you didn't mind being ragged about young Ford last year. A silly little pussy-eyed nonentity with cheeks like wax apples."

"But you didn't know me then," John declared in astonishment.

"I knew you . . . oh, not to speak to, but to look at and admire from a distance."

"Well, I should mind being ragged about Ford now," John decided. "I've chucked that kind of thing completely. So don't always go on digging in this business about being a Jew. As a matter of fact, if you want to know, I get more pleasure out of being with you than with anybody at the school."

"Is that true?"

"If it weren't true do you think I would sit here and listen to the tosh you've been talking this afternoon? But I must go now."

After John was on his way back to Church Row Emil went in search of his mother. He found her turning over a photograph album of pictures in continental galleries. When he asked her what she was looking for she told him she was trying to find the figure that resembled his friend.

"He reminds me of some picture, but I cannot recall which."

"Well, I always think his smile is like that Leonardo in the Louvre."

"No, not really. It's another picture."

"He's always elusive," said Emil. "Did you notice his eyes when Julius was playing that old tune of Schumann's? He has just told me he's in love with a girl."

"Poor John. Our seventeen-year-old loves are not usually happy loves."

"I think perhaps he would tell you about her," said Emil, who could not resist torturing himself. "Try to make him, will you, mother?"

"Why, I believe you're in love with him yourself . . . yourself," she repeated in a remote voice, catching a

shadowy glimpse of her own dark grace as she moved across the round mirror set in ebony above the mantelpiece.

"I know I am," her son avowed.

"Emil, Emil, why does everybody in our family cry for the moon?"

Next day Emil and John were back in class, and the dull round of school was once more slowly revolving, so slowly for John in fact that by the time Saturday came he felt a year older. However, apart from an attempt by Abercrombie, the Captain of the Fifteen, to make him reconsider the scratching of his name from the list of those playing for the Second Fifteen on the ground that much scratching was a piece of disloyalty to the School, nothing jeopardized John's plans for Saturday.

It was a disappointment when he reached the Fenwicks' house sharp at three o'clock to hear that Connie had no intention of listening to the American parson read his paper on the attitude of Scots Jacobites in America toward the Restoration.

"No, thank you," she said. "I'll see quite enough freaks at Olympia to-night."

John took a deep draught from her eyes, which was as fortifying as and much more exhilarating than a glass of dark brown sherry, and found a corner in the drawing-room whence he could inconspicuously watch the gathering of the members of the West London Legitimist League, most of whom were more unlike John's con-

ception of Jacobites than even the most virulent Whig caricature could have depicted them.

To the majority of the young men present there clung an air rather of thwarted femininity than of thwarted political hopes. Nothing could have been less like the grave and gallant heroes of Jacobite romance than these wriggling giggling epicenes, most of whom were wearing high double-breasted waistcoats buttoning in a V, the mark at this date of a vaulting fashion which had overleapt itself. These young men made swans' necks of their arms while they chattered to one another in the too utterly utter style which was introduced in the early 'eighties and has survived to the present day with merely occasional changes in the laudatory adjective to mark the passing vogue. In distinction from the elegance of the young men most of the women present looked as if they had been dragged through a couple of hedges before they reached Gladwyn Road. Indeed, some of the older ones looked as if they had been dragged through the Maze at Hampton Court as well. The most prominent figure in the room was a burly middle-aged man wearing a belted plaid and enough jewellery and arms to fill a show-case in the South Kensington Museum. It was a pity while he was about it that he did not wear a wig of the same period as his costume, for the top of his bald head gleamed with as much lustre as the cairngorm in his shoulder-brooch. This ponderous anachronism presently had to share his post as a cynosure with another elderly man wearing the saffron kilt of Ireland, a saffron plaid, a green doublet, and a variety of neo-Celtic brooches and pins, one of which came undone and penetrated the backside of a gaunt old dame who had plunged down beside him at the beginning of the Ameri-

can parson's paper. The effect of the O'Dash's saffron kilt was slightly marred by the extremely pronounced paunch of the O'Dash himself which gave it an uncomely hitch-up in front to reveal when the O'Dash was seated that those chubby legs as smooth as pork ended in a pair of saffron drawers.

"My dear," John heard one elegant young epicene titter to a friend, "I'm sure the O'Dash is in the family way!"

"Oh, my dear, of course, the Royal Family way!"

The paper by the American parson was not of great interest, and when it was read John wondered if he might not escape downstairs to simpler surroundings. However, Mr Fenwick brought him out of his corner in order to introduce him to the Marquis of Ruvignal.

"Who as I expect you know," said Mr Fenwick, "is the greatest genealogist we have."

The Marquis of Ruvignal proved to be a spare little man wearing an overlong frock-coat, a black satin tie, and white spats, though spats at this date were as *démodé* as the frock-coat was presently to become. The Marquis peered at John through a pair of gold pince-nez, but when John had been talking to him for a while he became so much impressed by the extent of his erudition that he forgot the discrepancy between the grandeur of the Marquis's name and the dowdiness of his appearance in the pleasure of listening to an expert. He was cheered, too, by the Marquis's condemnation of many of the present company as *poseurs*, and of some even as positive frauds.

"But if you study the history of legitimism," the little man went on, "you'll find it threatened at every stage by the insincerity and untrustworthiness of many of its most

prominent adherents. On the other hand, the baseness of some has always been compensated for by the nobility of others. The greater the cause the meaner will appear so many of its supporters, and in any cause which depends to the extent of ours on a personal devotion that very devotion is going to be the reason of jealousy than which there is no more powerful temptation to disloyalty. To cite an example from the greatest cause the world has known, the cause of our Blessed Lord, you can find in jealousy the explanation of the treachery of Judas."

"But do you think that Jacobitism can ever again become a vital issue?" John asked.

"Jacobitism? No," the Marquis replied without hesitation. "But Carlism is not yet dead in Spain. And even Bourbonism is not yet dead in Naples. A restoration in France is still a possibility. But Jacobitism, if by Jacobitism you mean the restoration of the present Queen of Bavaria to the throne of Great Britain and Ireland, Jacobitism is dead. There are at the present moment over seven hundred people with more right to the throne than Victoria, but there is not a practical claimant among the lot. Indeed, I am quite sure that the large majority of them are unaware that they have any claim at all. Moreover, the present dynasty of the country is essentially popular. In fact it is an emanation of the middle-class ideals by which the material greatness of England and part of Scotland has been built up. Whatever may be the political developments of the coming century that dynasty will instinctively adapt itself to them. You may say that when the crown was offered to the Elector of Hanover he accepted it as a hireling monarch; but remember he was hired to reign not to rule, and none of

his successors has ever been allowed to forget it. The hostility of Ireland to the reigning family is really directed against them as a perfect emanation of Great Britain. The support that Ireland gave the Stuarts was based not on any particular affection for the Stuarts, but on the fact that England did not want the Stuarts, to which was added the Catholic bias."

"Do you think a legitimist claimant would have a chance of being recognized by the Irish?"

The Marquis shook his head.

"Ireland has passed far beyond legitimism. Ireland will aim at a republic for the government of a free Ireland. If Ireland wants a king there are descendants of Brian Boru at thirteen for twelve all over the country. That spherical gentleman in the saffron kilt is one of them."

At this moment the O'Dash rose to ask if Miss Macdonald-Smith could not be prevailed upon to sing some of the old Jacobite airs to her own accompaniment on the clarsach. There seemed to be no difficulty whatever in prevailing upon Miss Macdonald-Smith, and two of the elegant young men went tittering off downstairs to fetch up the instrument, which one of them could have carried quite easily by himself, for it turned out to be a small harp. Miss Macdonald-Smith, who was nearly as thin as one of her own harp-strings and had a mop of fair hair stuck all over with neo-Celtic combs, which gave it something of the appearance of the inside of an untidy work-basket, seated herself on a footstool. She twanged a few preliminary chords before demanding, with what John considered an abominably affected sigh, what she should sing. Everybody seemed to suggest a

different song, and Miss Macdonald-Smith, after sighing deeply again, murmured:

"Oh dear, it's all very difficult, isn't it?"

"If I were a spider," John whispered to the Marquis, with whom by this time he felt much at ease, "I'd sit down beside her and frighten Miss Muffet away."

"I'd bite her first," said the Marquis fiercely.

"Very difficult," Miss Macdonald-Smith sighed again. "Shall I sing *Came ye by Atholl?*"

There was an affirmative chorus, whereupon Miss Macdonald-Smith struck such a resounding chord that two of the strings snapped like a couple of Chinese crackers exploding.

"The first shots of the campaign," murmured the Marquis.

"Oh dear, I am so sorry," Miss Macdonald-Smith dithered. "Never mind, I can manage, I think." Whereupon she sang *Came ye by Atholl?* in a sad little rustle of a voice.

"A great song, Marquis," observed the gentleman in the belted plaid when Miss Macdonald-Smith had twanged her final note.

The Marquis, adjusting his pince-nez, nodded curtly.

Miss Macdonald-Smith was pressed to sing again; but early on in *Bonnie Charlie's now awa'* three strings snapped in quick succession, and deserting her clarsach she fled from the footstool, leaving the centre of the room to an immense woman called Miss Worthington who in a foghorn contralto sang *Will ye no' come back again?*

"If he doesn't hear that," said the Marquis drily, "we may safely assume that he never will come back now."

Miss Worthington went on with *Over the sea to Skye*,

her voice rising to a full gale, and she might have continued for the rest of the afternoon if she had not been driven from the centre of the room by another woman who with the help of three Ganymedes was carrying what looked like a battering-ram. This was a Mrs Herbert Bindon who dressed in a green waistless gown and wearing a wreath of tinsel bays was about to re-ite to the accompaniment of the large Irish harp, which was laid horizontally on the table like a huge zither.

Ping! Peng! Pang! Pong! Pung!

Mrs Bindon went undulating along the side of her prostrate harp to strike five solemn notes of deepening profundity, and then came undulating back again, chanting in a lugubrious monotone:

"I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree."

Pung! Pong! Pang! Peng! Ping!

"And a small cabin build there, of clay and wattles made."

Ping! Peng! Pang!

It was more than John could stand. Regardless of what his host might think of him, he fled from the room, barely managing to hold in his laughter till the door was closed behind him.

"What are you laughing at?" exclaimed Hetty, who was coming out of the dining-room.

"That female in green," he gasped. "Ping! Pong! Pung!"

"Mrs Bindon?"

John nodded, and began to laugh again. Hetty pulled him into the dining-room, where he and Hetty and Connie and Rupert and Mrs Fenwick all laughed together.

"She looked as if she were stalking the Marquis,"

John gurgled. "And when she reached 'Pung!' he said to me under his breath, 'Good God, I believe she's going to spring at me.' That's what started me laughing. I say, I hope Mr Fenwick won't be awfully bored by my behaviour; but I simply couldn't stop."

The girls assured him that their father was used to the effect of Mrs Bindon's recitation. They too had fled from it in unmanageable mirth.

It looked as if Mrs Bindon had broken up the gathering, for a few minutes later voices in the hall proclaimed that the members of the West London Legitimist League were homing.

"Well, how did you enjoy it?" the host enquired of John when the house was empty of conspirators.

"I liked the Marquis very much."

"A genuine scholar," Mr Fenwick testified. "And what is more a shrewd practical man. The Ruvignals have been living in this country since the French Revolution, and though the present Marquis is deep in every Royalist project he is more of an Englishman than a Frenchman."

"I didn't care for Mrs Bindon," John ventured.

"A preposterous woman," Mr Fenwick declared, and John was able to feel undisgraced by his flight from Mrs Bindon.

Neither of the older Fenwicks felt inclined for Olympia. So the party consisted of the two girls, Rupert, and John. John found Rupert a pleasant and sensible youth, a judgment he founded upon Rupert's readiness to stick to Hetty and leave Connie to himself.

Before going in to watch the circus they visited the Freaks. When they had stared in turn at the Bearded

Lady, the Skeleton Man, the Circassian Giant, the Midgets, Jo-jo the Dog-faced Man from Siberia, and an Oriental with the body of a little girl growing out of his middle and perfect except for the lack of a head, John began to feel queasy. Yet why should physical freaks make one feel queasy, whereas mental freaks like some of those people this afternoon were merely funny or irritating? Logically they ought to make one feel just as queasy as these unfortunate creatures exhibiting their deformities and abnormalities to sightseers. Moreover, one attribute they did possess in common, and that was vanity. That wretched creature with the child growing out of him had looked viperish when he fancied that the gaping crowds were paying more attention to his neighbour Jo-Jo than himself. And when the Bearded Lady in her white satin *décolleté* had gathered more spectators round her than the Skeleton Man in the next division, he began to pirouette and prance and attitudinize like a half-witted girl to draw the public gaze back to himself. It had been the same this afternoon. Everybody competing to be a cynosure.

"I don't think I should like to be a freak," Rupert observed pensively.

"But you are a freak," his sisters exclaimed simultaneously.

"I'm not, am I, Ogilvie? Anyway, I don't look like a nigger," he retorted to his sisters, who at once began to tickle his ribs, making him leap back and land on the toe of a solemn countrywoman who was gazing at the midgets as if they were piglings in a sty.

"I say, I beg your pardon, ma'am," Rupert gulped.

"If it had been my other foot, young man, I might of

said summat," declared the solemn countrywoman with an admonitory nod. Then she transferred from the right cheek to the left the bull's-eye she was sucking and resumed her contemplation of the midgets.

"You are asses," Rupert told his sisters.

"You ought to know. You're our brother," said Hetty.

"Worse luck," added Connie.

After these flashing sallies they left the Freaks, and took their seats for the circus.

The great moment of the performance was a female acrobat's dive from the highest point of the glass dome into the net above the tanned ring; but it was a greater moment for John than for anybody else in the audience, because as the gleaming figure shot through the air Connie caught his hand in nervous apprehension and when the female acrobat went plunging gracefully across the net to stand at the top of the ladder and take her ovation Connie left her hand in his. And on the way to Gladwyn Road, a walk of twenty minutes through the cold but clear March night, she let him draw her back from the other two and seemed to be wanting to linger with him on this pavement starry with flecks of mica under the starry sky.

"Let me kiss you, Connie?"

"No, no; Hetty and Rupert are just in front."

"You would let me kiss you if they weren't?" he pressed.

"Who knows?"

But when he looked into her eyes by the light of the lamp-post they were passing, he read 'yes'.

"Well, anyway, you can take your glove off."

"Why should I take my glove off on a cold night like this?"

In spite of the question she let him hold her wrist with the hand that was through her arm and with his other hand drew the glove from her fingers, thrilling to the smoothness of her nails as he tugged at the tips of them.

For a while they walked without words.

"What are you thinking, John?" she asked at last.

"I was thinking that perhaps if you came down to see me out as you did last week I would kiss you," he told her.

"Oh, that's what you were thinking?"

The inside of the Fenwicks' house seemed warm and scented as Arabia after the coldness of the outside air. John was delighted to hear Rupert ordered off to bed at once. Here was the dangerous member of the family to that farewell out of the way. John felt sure he could count on Hetty's sympathetic aid.

"Well, I've had a glorious time, Mrs Fenwick. I think I must be going. Do you mind if I bring my bicycle lamp into the hall to light it?"

"Connie will help you light it," said Hetty.

For a moment John feared that Connie was going to tease him by holding back. Then he was alone in the hall with her, the voices of the rest murmurous behind a closed door.

"I'll get the lamp," said a voice which did not belong to himself. The lamp was set down on the hall-table. The lamp was lighted. Rather than move an inch away from her he put the glowing match into his pocket and caught her to him. One slow kiss . . . but when he would have kissed her again a finger was at her lips. The voices were still safely murmurous. What need for alarm? She opened the front-door.

"Another kiss! Connie, you must!"

She leant forward and kissed him lightly on the mouth. The door closed. When John found his senses he was riding very fast, or rather he was once again not riding but floating on his bicycle while unlighted houses and shuttered shops streamed past him on either side.

Emil Stern's condemnation of the passion on which his friend was launched as unsuitable to the world of school looked like being justified. It was all very well for John to remind himself that the course of true love never did run smooth. When Shakespeare wrote that, he was thinking of strife between Capulets and Montagues, not of such contemptible obstacles to love as a schoolboy's end of the term examinations. Shakespeare's opinion of schoolboys was in that seven ages of man speech in *As You Like It*. 'The whining schoolboy with his satchel, and shining morning face, creeping like snail unwillingly to school.' Devastating, absolutely devastating!

However, a week before the production of *As You Like It* by the Florence Harding School of Dramatic Art a more serious obstacle to the course of love than the humiliating restrictions of pupilage presented itself in the person of Mr Arthur Dancaster, whose help (he was at present resting according to his card in the cheapest column of *The Stage*) Miss Harding had invited to play Touchstone, a part she had no male pupil competent to take.

John met Arthur Dancaster first at the Fitzgeralds'

house, where Ellen Fitzgerald had invited him to give herself and Connie Fenwick some special coaching which would have been impossible under the eye of Miss Harding.

"It looks as if the young barnstormer in the size-twelve yellow button-boots were beginning to take more than a professional interest in the way Connie Fenwick manages her hands," Edward Fitzgerald observed to John with a chuckle. "He's had hold of one of her paws now for about five minutes."

John had been trying to drive from his mind this very thought that Fitz had sardonically put into words.

"Rot," he snapped angrily. "He's simply giving her some useful tips."

"He's giving the lady more than tips, but we must remember, 'No, the heart that has truly loved never forgets, but as truly loves on to the close,'" Fitz hummed. "But I wouldn't be too sure that her raven hair deserves it, Judge. Begod, it's herself that's wanting him to show her."

John summoned enough self-control not to make an ass of himself by saying any more to Fitz; but he could not dispel the livid cloud of jealousy which thickened round him ever denser and denser as the rehearsal progressed. He could not help recognizing that the odds were heavily in favour of the actor. For one thing he was a great deal older than himself—possibly he was as much as twenty-four or even twenty-five, which might well be too fascinating an age for Connie to resist. Was he good-looking? Certainly he had unusually large feet, and those ghastly yellow button-boots did not make them look smaller. His face, however, was not bad,

and Connie might easily consider that faded pink complexion and that blue puffiness beneath the eyes attractive evidence of hard living. His cuffs were slightly frayed and his serge suit was rather shiny; but his masterful manner gave no hint of his being hard up. He was probably in a position to marry her to-morrow. The outlook was bad. Of course Arthur Dancaster might vanish after the performance at the Bijou Theatre, back to the touring life from which malicious fortune had snatched him; but even so was not Connie herself longing to be out on tour in her first engagement? What more likely than to find herself in the same company as Dancaster?

However, Dancaster did not vanish when *As You Like It* was over, nor, it appeared, was there much likelihood now of his ceasing to rest before July when the autumn tours started. The maddening thing was that the Easter holidays were here, that his father was away for a fortnight, and that but for Arthur Dancaster it might have been possible for John to forget for three weeks that he was still a schoolboy.

Although it was some consolation to find how much Connie's family disapproved of Arthur Dancaster, that very disapproval was in the actor's favour, because it inevitably increased his appeal to Connie.

One afternoon, when John and his rival had both arrived together at the Fenwick's house to find the whole family out, the actor had invited John to come round to his digs in order, he said, that he might have the help of some advice.

Dancaster had rooms near Addison Road railway-station, and as they walked along together through the

sunny streets on that afternoon at April's end he pressed John to explain in what lay the cause of Mr Fenwick's prejudice against him.

"You know, old boy, I'm not the sort of chap who kids himself, and I can see perfectly well that old Fenwick dislikes me. Now why?"

John did not feel he could tell Dancaster that one of the reasons for this dislike was Mr Fenwick's boredom with his inability to talk about anything except his cleverness not merely on the stage but everywhere else. So he said weakly that he thought Dancaster was imagining a lot.

The actor shook his head with a theatrical deliberation.

"Look here, old man, I know I have a big imagination—in fact there are a lot of people who think I invent some of my best stories—but I'm not imagining what old Fenwick thinks of me. I don't mind telling you, though there aren't many people I would tell this to, that yesterday when Connie came down as usual to see me off the premises I distinctly heard the old chap say to his wife, 'Good gad, my dear, does that young man think Connie is the parlour-maid?' That's a bit thick, eh? Of course I pretended not to have heard anything when Connie looked at me, but I could see the poor kid was hurt, and of course that hurt me. I'm shockingly sensitive. In fact I'm as bloody near being psychic as doesn't matter. And then the other day when I was telling the old man about that time at Bristol when I fluffed my way through Shylock . . . through Shylock, old man . . . without a rehearsal because the leading man and his understudy were both down with flu, he yawned. Yes, old boy, he opened his mouth as wide as a bear

asking for a bun, and bloody well yawned. I might have put it down to his being a bit doddery and thought no more about it, but he went out of his way to say something damned unpleasant—damned unpleasant, old man. He said, 'I'm afraid you think you're talking to my daughter, Mr Dancaster.' Now that's pretty offensive. In the first place why call her 'my daughter'? He knows quite well she's Connie to me, and then why call me Mr Dancaster? I don't expect him to call me Arthur. But after all Dancaster is good enough between equals."

"He's always rather stately," John put in.

"My dear laddie, you don't have to teach me anything about heavy fathers. *You* call him 'stately'. *I* should call him 'pompous'. But we won't quarrel over that. The point I'm making is that he reserves that kind of thing for me. For some reason or other he has taken a definite dislike to me, and it's a pity, seeing that Connie and I are engaged."

John felt as if a passer-by had punched him heavily just below the heart.

"Engaged?" he stammered.

"Yes, the dear girl gave me her promise yesterday. Ogilvie, old man, I consider myself the luckiest fellow on earth. Hullo, what's the matter? You're looking a bit rotten. Come in here and have a brandy. We'll go up to the billiard-room. It'll be quiet there and we'll be able to talk."

The public-house they went into was not far from Olympia. It was the first public-house in London of which John had seen the inside. The billiard-room smelt of stale tobacco-smoke and spirit, a melancholy enough place but for the nonce empty. Dancaster and

John seated themselves on the raised settee along the window.

"Yours was a brandy, wasn't it?" the actor asked.

John hurriedly said he should prefer a glass of beer.

"A bit heavy at this time of the afternoon," Dancaster observed. "Still, it's your inside, old man, not mine."

For himself he ordered a double Scotch with a splash. When the drinks were set down between them on the circular iron table, the surface of which was decorated with a high-kicking young woman dancing with a humanized bottle of whisky, Dancaster produced from a waistcoat pocket a small leather case.

"The ring, old man," he announced in a reverent voice, pressing the fastener to allow the lid to spring open and reveal a gold ring set with a single ruby.

"Isn't that Her?" he asked, in a tone which suggested rather his own immense sagacity in discovering such an appropriate ring than any uniqueness in Connie. "My hat," he added reflectively, "if it wasn't Providence that put me on to that man in Salford who gave me the winner of the Grand National, what else was it? I tell you, old boy, I've knocked about in my time, but I'm beginning to realize the truth of 'there's a divinity that shapes our ends, rough-hew them how we will.' Shakespeare knew. And then some blithering asses try to tell you that Shakespeare was written by Bacon. Did I ever tell you my retort to one of them? Well, it's pretty b.g. 'Perhaps you'll tell me next,' I said, 'that the Bible was written by Ham?' And he looked a bit foolish, laddie. But as I was saying, if I hadn't met that fellow in Salford last February and got a long price on that gee-gee, I couldn't have bought Connie as much as a red-currant

engagement ring let alone a ruby. And that's a good ruby. Pigeon's blood, old man."

"It looks splendid," said John.

"Now, I'm going to whisper something in your shell-like, Ogilvie, and you're not going to take it in the wrong spirit. I know you were a bit fond of Connie yourself. Don't interrupt, old boy, I don't blame you. Do you think I don't know she's a girl in a million? Look here, Ogilvie, if you ever suspect that I don't consider her the grandest little girl who ever stepped on this earth I give you free permission to kick me from one end of England to the other. And don't you start thinking that Connie said anything to me about you. All she said to me was that you were one of the best friends a girl could have. And I said, 'Right, sweetheart, the fellow you can speak of like that is my friend.' "

Danaster leant back to sip at heart's ease the double Scotch with a splash. John sat silent. Perhaps if he had been eight years older and able to propose to Connie, armed with a ruby engagement ring, she might have loved him enough to marry him. But between them there had been nothing except a few kisses, kisses, he now supposed sadly, wrung from her out of the kindness of her heart. He had often pressed her to say that she loved him, but she had always evaded a direct answer. It seemed impossible at this moment that he would ever recover from this blow. Yet the very fact that his wound was mortal demanded from him a courageous and generous attitude toward the man who had been the author of his hurt.

"When do you think you and Connie will get married?" he asked.

"We talk of two years from now," Dancaster replied. "But of course if her father takes up this attitude it may be three. She won't be twenty-one for three years, you know."

"You haven't said anything to Mr Fenwick?"

"No, and that's where I want your advice, old man. I dislike the idea of a secret engagement. Dash it, Ogilvie, my life has been an open book since I started out on tour in Old Comedy six years ago with a salary of eighteen shillings a week and only one part worth calling a part, which was Trip in *The School for Scandal*. I'm bound to say the Guv'nor told me I was the best Trip he'd had in twenty years' management. But something whispers in my shell-like that Connie's father is going to turn down Arthur Dancaster as a prospective son-in-law. There's a *je ne sais quoi* about me which seems to irritate him. I suppose when all's said and done, it's what we call the paternal instinct. A kind of jealousy. So my notion is to let this spring and summer go by, anyway. I ought to be out on the road again in July, when of course I shall start saving. No more of these, Ogilvie," he went on, fondling the glass which had contained the double Scotch with splash. "But who cares? I tell you I'm going to enjoy saving up to marry the finest little girl in the world. The only thing is, if we're not openly engaged, it's going to be difficult to see as much of each other alone as we want. Now I don't like the idea of asking Connie round to my digs. In the first place the landlady is a tartar and in the second place somebody might see her, and by God, old man, I'd sooner be a Junior Prompter till the Last Ring Down than compromise Connie. So I was wondering, old man, and this is where I want

your advice, I was wondering if you could ask us both up to your place some time and give us the chance of a really good long talk about the future. I know your pater's away just now; but if you were there—in the house, I mean—why, that would make it absolutely all right."

To be courageous and generous? And here was the opportunity.

"Why, of course I will," said John.

As he made this promise two of the Olympia freaks came in to play billiards. One was the Skeleton Man: the other was the Oriental with the child's body attached. To see him pushing aside this dead weight of human flesh when he bent over to make a shot was more than John could stand. The emotion of this afternoon seized upon the disgust he felt to find expression.

"Come out of here, Dancaster," he urged. "I shall be sick in a minute, watching those two."

The air of the golden April afternoon for all the dust of London tasted sweet after that stale billiard-room.

"You'd better come up with Connie to-morrow afternoon," he told his successful rival. "Shall I write and ask her?"

"No, I'll find a way to let her know."

John felt incapable of staying longer in Dancaster's company. He had left his bicycle at a shop for some minor adjustment. On the plea of having to go and see about it he escaped. When he was alone again he was able to believe that what he was going to do for Connie was in the grand style of noble behaviour. The emptiness of personal loss was filled for the time with a windy elation. No day-dream is so bewitching to the male as the

day-dream of self-sacrifice. The David Garricks and Sydney Cartons and a hundred other figures of the popular stage testify to that.

It happened that Mrs Stern had invited him to go that evening with herself and Emil to a concert at Queen's Hall. Tchaikovsky's Pathetic Symphony, which at this date was still far from being hackneyed, was to be played, and no piece of music more appropriate to John's mood of self-compassion could have been provided. He had not expected to find himself capable of such a response to large-scale orchestral music until he heard this symphony, and he was on the point of rebuking Mrs Stern when she decided that it made a too undignified appeal to the emotions to be granted the name of great art. He was nearly saying to her that only the stricken heart could understand the depth of this symphony's despair. Luckily for his vanity later he did not make such a fool of himself.

"Wouldn't you allow a composer to be as personal as a poet?" he asked.

"Yes, but he mustn't crawl, John."

"Still, might not this symphony be the expression of an unhappiness which had to express itself like this or go mad?"

"If it is, the mind that thus expresses itself is morbid," she said. "I prefer Balzac. To the wounded heart shadow and silence—*l'ombre et le silence*. Didn't you feel that first movement to be one long whine?"

The whining schoolboy! John decided to take refuge in his ignorance of music.

"I expect you're right, Mrs Stern; but it did move me, and I don't think I am easily moved yet by music."

"Aren't we moved by whatever we can pin on to our own experience?" Emil asked. "I was moved by this symphony too, but I'm sure that in a few years I shall wonder why. The real point is not whether we are moved by it, but what its intellectual content is."

"Yes, but I've not reached the stage of being able to talk about the intellectual content of music," John objected. "And I don't suppose I ever shall."

"I'm glad that it was able to make even an emotional appeal to John," said Mrs Stern. "Besides I dare say I am prejudiced. I read the Russian writer Dostoievsky with just the same prejudice. I have seen so much emotion indulged in for the pleasure of indulgence that I want my literature and my music be to harder. And Tchaikovsky certainly is soft."

A messenger boy came next morning to 98 Church Row with a note from Arthur Dancaster to say that he and Connie would arrive separately at John's house round about half-past two. He might be a few minutes late himself as he had to go down to Maiden Lane to see an agent. There was the chance of his getting a shop immediately, and he did not want to miss it.

So it was Connie who arrived first.

"There's a young lady asking for you, Master John," Watson announced with a hint of disapproval in her voice. "But I didn't get her name perfectly clear."

John hurried past Watson down to the hall to bring Connie up to the library. She was wearing a fawn-coloured coat and skirt, a light feather boa, and a chip hat wreathed with crimson cherries. To John she seemed incarnate Spring.

In the library she pulled off her glove and showed

John the ring upon her third finger. Yes, the ruby had been well chosen.

"What a fool you must have thought me," he sighed.

"No girl thinks anybody a fool for loving her," she murmured in that deep faintly husky voice which always sent his blood coursing. "But, John dear, you won't go on loving me. No, no, don't look so indignant. You'll be wondering within a year what could have made you fancy you ever did love me."

"Of course, if you want to think that, you'll think it. It's no good arguing about what may happen. Time will show you. But, Connie, you do love Dancaster?"

"I do love him, John dear."

"It was so quick."

"It would have been just as quick if I had loved you. And, John, you know I very nearly did. Perhaps it was only my sense of the ridiculous which stood in the way."

"Oh, I'm ridiculous, am I?"

"Not you. But to fall seriously in love with somebody over a year younger than myself. That would have been ridiculous."

"A year is not so much as all that."

"It's a long time when one is eighteen, John. I ought never to have let you kiss me. It was wrong of me really; but I did not know then that Arthur was going to come into my life like that."

"You're going to keep the engagement secret?"

"We must. Father won't take Arthur seriously. In fact he has been quite horrid about him. And you know Arthur is such a darling."

John gulped. He was prepared to sacrifice his own feelings to nobility of behaviour; but he had hoped that

Connie would not expect him to admit humbly his rival's superiority to himself.

Luckily Watson came in to say that there was a gentleman who wished to speak to Master John.

"Show him up here, please."

When the old parlour-maid had retired John told Connie that he was going to leave her and Dancaster in this room, where he would come and fetch them for tea at half-past four. Connie flushed.

"John, what a dear you are!" she exclaimed, putting out an impulsive hand. Alas, John's consciousness of a sublime sacrifice was fast deserting him. He was beginning to feel jealousy shivering through him like a cold nausea. He hurried out of the room as Dancaster entered it, throwing a greeting over his shoulder and noticing his silhouette against the sunny window-pane when he moved across the quiet carpet to greet Connie.

"Watson! Watson! We'll have tea in the dining-room at half-past four," he called after the parlour-maid. Then he retired upstairs to his own room and sat looking down over the lime-trees and chestnuts in the gardens, over the sheen of grey roofs in the blue haze of London from which here and there steeple-tops flashed and the wings of circling pigeons glittered in the sun's eye. It was in Hampstead just about a hundred years ago that Keats had thought it rich to die on the song of a nightingale and forget the fever and the loneliness and fret of human existence. It would be richer still to die upon this April afternoon in one wild swoop.

What was there to live for? The great poems had been written. The battles worth fighting in had been fought. From the boredom of school he had been plunged into

the excitement of love, and within a month he was faced with nothing except the boredom of school again. Yes, it would come to an end in a little over a year, but another three years of dependency would follow. By the time freedom was his it would not be worth having. Fitz had the vision of his country's freedom. Emil had the vision of changing the ways of nations. If Connie had loved him he could have struggled somehow through these endless years of youth, and with her help he could have reached some decision about what he wanted to do in life . . . and thus for the rest of the afternoon John brooded by his window, yielding without the armour of experience to the lovesick egoism of youth.

At twenty minutes past four John went down to the library. Feeling ashamed of the precaution lest in Connie's eye it might stamp him as common, he fumbled with the handle of the door for a moment before entering. Dancaster was jumping away from the armchair toward the fireplace, his usually faded pink complexion a peony red, Connie darkly flushed was sitting back awkwardly in the armchair, her hair ruffled, her eyes in a melting glitter. Both looked hot and sticky and hatefully undignified. Dancaster sniggered. Connie tittered. It was the ugliest sight John had seen, the physical evidence of this love he had thought to make beautiful for himself and for them by proving the selflessness of his own devotion. He wanted to scowl at Dancaster to express his opinion of his behaviour, for it was he who must be blamed for exposing Connie to this intolerable humiliation. Yet out of embarrassment for them both all he could do was to smile weakly and ask if they had enjoyed

their afternoon together. Yes, he was one of three now, in a hideous group.

"Well, I've got a shop, old boy," Dancaster was saying. "So it was really our good-bye this afternoon."

Connie had risen now from the armchair. She was searching in its depths for a comb which had slipped from her hair.

"I think tea will be ready now," John announced. He was trying to endow the commonplace refreshment with a kind of lustral significance as if thereby the afternoon could be wiped out. As they passed through the door Connie pulled him back. Her hand was hot and damp.

"You were such a dear to leave us like that," she murmured.

John mumbled in embarrassment. That recognition of his selflessness which should have been so ennobling merely made him feel a broken-backed ass. Had Troilus a crumpled collar in the Trojan moonlight or Cressida untidy hair and a sticky hand?

It was an attempt to present the situation ideally which first led John to write a story. In this story he was again the nobly disinterested, the unworthily rejected lover. The substance of Arthur Dancaster under the accidents of a French count revealed itself for what it was. In fact his behaviour as a French count to the unhappy Valérie was even more odious on paper than John had ever allowed himself, before he took pen in hand, to suppose Arthur Dancaster might be to Connie. After winning Valérie's heart the Count tossed it from him like the discarded plaything it seemed to such a rake. John in the guise of a chivalrous young Scotsman, the

greatness of whose love Valérie had failed to appreciate, challenged the Count to a duel. In the first version of the story the young Scotsman was shot in a secluded corner of the Champs-Elysées at sunrise on a fine morning in May, calling upon the Count with his last breath to repair the injury he had done to an innocent girl, the reader being left to imagine that the Count's next action would be to obtain a marriage licence. John was particularly pleased with the way the blood of the chivalrous young Scotsman "dyed the fallen chestnut-blossom to a richer red than was ever seen in the famous avenue that ran for over a mile through the park which surrounded the splendid château of Count d'Avignaud in the fair land of Touraine."

John was wondering whether he might not try the effect of this death scene on Connie when word came that Dancaster had found her an engagement in the very company with which he was himself touring, thanks to the sudden illness of the young woman who played the soubrette part. There was a good deal of argument at the house in Gladwyn Road before Mr Fenwick agreed to sanction his daughter's first professional engagement. It had been seeming far enough away until the advent of Mr Arthur Dancaster.

"I don't like the fellah. I consider him a boundah."

Mrs. Fenwick could not be so severe as her husband. She had retained many of the prejudices of her upbringing, and could not withhold a measure of respect for anything so definite as her daughter's engagement to Arthur Dancaster. Young men had kept company in her circle—sometimes for years. Maternal pride could not be kept in perfect control. In the end Connie was allowed to go,

and as a sign of her right to freedom she sported the ruby ring her fiancé had given her. John was moodily jealous of the opportunities touring life would offer for behaviour like that on the afternoon in Church Row. To add to his depression Hetty confided in him the tale of an unfortunate experience of her own when staying with a French family in that fair land of Touraine where John's villain had his château and park and avenue of horse-chestnuts. An attractive young man, whom she had met at the various social events of the neighbourhood to which she was scrupulously taken for the improvement of her polite small-talk in French, had apparently seduced her. At any rate, that was the least John could suppose had happened from the details Hetty gave him. The last year of the nineteenth century did not provide young women with the sexual jargon with which their daughters were to be equipped. And in the last year of the nineteenth century the thought of a young Englishwoman of sweet and twenty being seduced by a Frenchman was extremely shocking to a youth of seventeen. John had heard a few ribald boasts from contemporaries who had played the Don Johnnie with favouring maidservants, but such advanced amorists had always been careful to stress the fact that they were not the first. The biggest rips of John's acquaintance shuddered at the thought of being pioneers when a woman's virtue had to be spoilt. The immediate reaction of Hetty's confidence was a sudden shameful desire for her. Astonishment at his own baseness was succeeded by a sharp disgust with himself, which took all the pleasure out of staining the fallen chestnut-blossom in the Champs-Elysées with the blood of the chivalrous young Scotsman who was

his own heroic self. John changed the end of his story and left the Count upon the field of honour, the contemptuous smile for his young rival fixed upon his pale face by death. When Hetty told John the tale of her French romance he supposed that she was making an example of herself to warn him what might be the result of Connie's acting on tour in the same company as Arthur Dancaster. It did not strike him that the desire this revelation quickened in him was reciprocated by Hetty, and the fear that in a moment of weakness he might reveal to her his own baseness kept him away from Gladwyn Road. One day he met her casually and was reproached for the desertion of his friends.

"I know you'll forget all about us one day," she told him, "but you needn't forget us so soon."

John assured her that his was not the kind of temperament that forgot old friends.

"But you won't be able to help it. Your life will be such a different kind of life," she insisted.

John was puzzled, for not being ambitious in his dreams he did not understand why she should hint at something he was not imagining for his own future.

"Don't be foolish, John. You won't deliberately drop us because you don't think us good enough for you. I'm not suggesting that. But it's inevitable. Don't you realize that? You'll move in a different world."

"Not if it means chucking old friends," he declared obstinately.

"John, do you seriously suppose that even a year hence you'll be wanting our house or any of the people in it?"

"I suppose you're saying this because I haven't been

round to see you for a week. If I were to tell you the reason for that, you'd be absolutely astonished."

She gave him a quick look, and John to his chagrin knew his eyes were kindling. It was humiliating to think how Hetty would mock what he had believed to be his love for her sister. So recently parted from Connie, and already in his heart unfaithful to her!

"I don't think I should be so very much astonished," Hetty was murmuring, and there was in her voice a vibrancy which seemed actively to fan the glow behind his eyes. It did not strike him, however, that Hetty was far from despising his fickleness, for he had turned his head away and had not seen her own brown eyes melting.

"Anyhow, it's silly to be discussing what will happen a year from now," he said irritably. "I shall probably be stifled by boredom with this endless business of school. What's the use of talking here when it's ten to three and by three I have to be sitting at a desk and answering any idiotic question the usher chooses to ask me?"

"Come round to tea with us after school," she pressed.
But John shook his head.

"I've got to play in a form match."

Once upon a time these hours of cricket, amber hours after school, had cast a magic over the summer term. They had been eclogues, with bat for shepherd's crook and pads for goatskin mantle. Woman had not trespassed within that paradise. John's mind went back to that fine summer three years ago, the year of the Diamond Jubilee . . . the long shadows of the wickets in the declination of the seven o'clock sun . . . stained paper-bags full of cherry-stones pitched away into the privet bushes beside the pavilion . . . the last pair in for the

Classical Upper Fourth with three runs still to make to defeat the Modern Fourth B in the final and win the Junior Form Cricket Shield that year . . . the great golden face of the school clock showing three minutes to the hour. A fluky stroke between mid-off and cover-point. 'Run it out, run it out!' A desperate dash from the crease to get the third run. A fumble by the Modern Fourth wicket-keeper. Himself and Heythrop running toward the pavilion. Himself and Heythrop walking along the cloister toward the changing-room under the great red pile of the school. Dusky that cloister already, though sunset was an hour away. The sinewy slimness and hardness of Heythrop's arm as he gripped it affectionately. 'Yours was a ripping knock, Haycock.' 'Well, you stuck it jolly well, Judge, and that last hit of mine was a most stinking fluke. I thought I was hitting the ball round to leg.' 'What a rag, did you really?' 'I say, is the Tuck shut?' 'Yes.' 'Gosh, I could drink a ginger-beer, couldn't you?' 'Rather!' 'Let's go to Miss Briney's.'

Along the Hammersmith Road to Miss Briney's sweetshop. A suspicious old woman with a moustache, and a hairy mole on the end of her nose, and eyes like boot-buttons. 'I'll stand you an apricot noyau, Judge.' 'Now have a raspberry noyau with me, Haycock.' No more raspberry. Only greengage left. 'What a swizzle!' The slabs of noyau and the ginger-beer sharpen the appetite. 'How about some nougat?' No purchase equals this for extravagance. Threepence hardly takes you further into the lusciousness of nougat than a penny elsewhere. But the Junior Form Shield has been won and although the heroes who have won

it will be in the Lower Fifth next term and never watch its silver glitter on the wall of their classroom, they feel that nougat is the right ambrosia for immortals. So nougat succeeds noyau. And, to wind up, a mixed strawberry cream and lemon-water ice at twopence.

And then Heythrop, whose father is a doctor in Barnes, invites Ogilvie to tea with him next Saturday afternoon. After tea a walk along the towing-path. A rest upon a green bank hidden by osiers from the world. The Thames before them, majestic-seeming as ocean. Heythrop and himself. The warm July twilight. The noise of rowlocks and splash of clumsy oars and female giggles over the dimming water. 'What asses girls are, Judge!' 'Frightful asses, Haycock.' Deepening July twilight. Lapping of water among the reeds. Quickening of two hearts as Heythrop and Ogilvie turn on the cool grass to look at one another. Heythrop's grey eyes are shining visibly even in this warm July dusk. To say they were like stars would embarrass him that spake the simile and him that heard it. 'I vote when we're alone we'll call each other by our Christian names, John.' 'Rather, let's . . . Dick.'

Dick Heythrop! It had been brief enough that love, but never spoilt. Drowned a fortnight later in that very Thames which had lapped above the whispers of their boyish passion. Drowned on the first day of the summer holidays three years ago. Dick Heythrop would probably have been in the Eleven this term. He was the best bat among the Classical Juniors three years ago.

"Hullo, Judge, you're looking damned solemn."

John came to himself with a start. He was walking up the school steps, and the five-minutes bell was sounding for afternoon school. Two more hours of ennui. Two more hours of pedagogues' humour. Two more hours of pen-driving and turning back to the paragraph on page eighty-two and looking up the note on page two hundred and eleven, and taking down in your note-book this or that unnecessary elaboration of some minor point of interpretation. Conington reads. Papillon suggests. Jebb has an interesting emendation. Verrall boldly proposes. Two hours of stale summer air and buzzing of captive bluebottles and scratching nibs and glazed maps of Graecia Antiqua and Italia Antiqua and the Orbis Terrarum. Two more hours of plaster bas-reliefs and plaster models of temples and plaster heads and plaster fig-leaves and plaster torsos. A world of plaster, with Askew's pointer to direct one onward into a plaster futurity. Two more hours of polished wooden seats and penknife-hacked desklids and muddy inkpots and holland blinds pulled down to shut out the sunlight. Two more hours of Askew's rusty voice and grizzled beard.

"Are you riding back at five o'clock?"

John turned round in the corridor leading to the Lower Sixth classroom to let Emil Stern overtake him.

"No, I've got to play in a form match."

And that was nowadays almost as dreary a business as these endless weary hours of school.

"My mother wondered if you could come with us to the opera on Friday. Somebody has given her a box at Covent Garden."

When John asked leave of his father he fancied from his expression that the request was going to be met with the paternal objections to which he was accustomed.

"Covent Garden on Friday, eh?"

The eminent barrister's forehead was wrinkled in the way that so many Crown witnesses had seen it wrinkle when his suave cross-examination was failing to discredit their testimony.

"Well, Friday's the best evening for me," John put in quickly.

"Quite so. Quite so." Alexander Ogilvie hesitated again, still wrinkled. "They're doing *Aida*," he went on.

"Are they?" said John vaguely. It had not occurred to his inexperience of Covent Garden opera that the particular opera to be given had any bearing on the matter.

"I don't know that *Aida* is the one I would have chosen for you to see first. I should have thought *Faust* or *Carmen* . . . still, oh well, yes, you'd better take advantage of the offer." There was another wrinkled pause. Then an abrupt announcement. "As a matter of fact I'm going to Covent Garden myself next Friday. By the way, you know, you'll want a tail-coat. I think I can let you have a suit of mine. I'll tell Watson to get it out, and you can try it on before dinner."

The suit smelt of camphor, but it fitted John well, and it did not seem to him old-fashioned. He came down to dinner that night, pleased with himself.

"For heaven's sake, my boy, don't wear that ghastly choker. It makes your head look like a cauliflower."

"These are the only stick-up evening collars I've got."

"What size do you take?"

"Fifteen."

"Ah, yes, I'm afraid mine will be no good to you. You'd better buy some collars from my shirtmaker. He'll advise you. That bank-clerk's neckwear is unpleasant. Do you know I only gave up wearing that suit four years ago? If you have a figure like that at forty-two you'll have nothing to grumble about."

Mr Cuthbertson received John on Saturday morning with the respect due to the son of so eminent a barrister and so excellent a customer.

"But we must make you some shirts, Mr Ogilvie. Oh, I'm sure your father intended you to order some shirts. Dash it, I'll take the dashed responsibility myself."

Mr Cuthbertson, with his little black waxed moustache on his small waxy face, wearing widely braided black tail-coat and widely braided black trousers, darted about the discreet little Jermyn Street shop like a busy little garden beetle.

"But I'll want them for next Friday," said John.

"Dash it, sir, you shall have the dashed shirts by Thursday. We'll build you three. Hee-hee! The next time your father looks in I'll ask him if he wouldn't like to complete the half-dozen. And how many studs in front? Now, sir, will you let me give you a little piece of advice? Make it two. Dash it, solitaires have gone the way of Queen Anne. And yet you'll find gentlemen who ought to know better still trying to fasten down their shirt-fronts with one small pearl. Make it two, Mr Ogilvie. Two will establish itself as the number—not three. I know, I know." Mr Cuthbertson held up a dainty hand. "You're going to tell me that all your friends who don't carry one stud are carrying three. But dash it, and don't misunderstand what I'm going to say, sir—dash it, all

your friends are not buying their shirts in Jermyn Street. High Street, Kensington, is as near as most of them get. I know. I know. We'll mention no names; but the firm in question is not Jermyn Street. A decent respectable business, yes, but very definitely *not* Jermyn Street."

John was beginning to feel uncomfortably aware of the label on his own shirt.

"Now don't misunderstand me, sir. Dash it, I don't want to be misunderstood. But what was all very well for the schoolboy won't do for the man about town. We're not snobs, Mr Ogilvie. But we have our little prejudices, eh? And dash it, with Mafeking relieved and all that, don't you know, I say that the Empire is showing the rest of the world what is meant by an English gentleman, and I don't intend to let your father's son commit the teeniest dashed indiscretion so far as his outward appearance goes. Now, let me see, sir, who are your tailors, sir?"

Mr Cuthbertson looked at the label on John's jacket and shook his head.

"If I remember rightly, Mr Ogilvie Senior entrusts Bunting with his clothes. Capital old firm. Remarkable man, old Mr Bunting. Doesn't cut now, of course; but he writes out every bill in his own hand. Over eighty, sir, with a pair of Piccadilly weepers that would have made Lord Dundreary jealous. Yes, every dashed bill with his own hand. Won't allow a typewriter in the shop. And I wouldn't like to say how many of the officers who fell in the charge of the Light Brigade he cut for. Dash it, call dancing the poetry of motion? If you wanted to see the poetry of motion you looked at a pair of breeches by Bunting. Take my advice, sir, and the first chance you

get, ask your father to give you an introduction to Bunting's. Your father is one of the handsomest men at the Bar, and if he goes to Bunting's you can feel sure that he goes there to make the best of himself. And now for these collars. . . . If you take my advice you'll go straight for the wing. The wing is coming back, Mr Ogilvie. In another year you won't see a well-dressed man wearing anything else with formal clothes. Look at this model. We're advocating the gently rounded wing at the moment. Isn't that delicate? You're up to Latin and Greek, of course. Now, tell me, isn't that just the pair of dainty wings you'd fit to Cupid himself? You're laughing at me. Oh yes, you are, sir, and dash it, why shouldn't you? But that model carries me away every time I look at it. A dozen will be enough? And I'd like to show you this new double collar we're putting out. Very natty, isn't it? We had the Honourable Cecil Sturgess-Hughes in yesterday, and he said 'Damn it, Cuthbertson, I consider that collar the neatest I've seen.' Excuse the language, sir, but that's Mr Sturgess-Hughes's way. But perhaps you know him? He's off to South Africa soon with his squadron. Still, I feel happier about everything since Mafeking. What a night, eh? A genuine patriotic demonstration. It shows the country's sound in spite of all these pro-Boers. Do you know what I'd do with these pro-Boers? I'd denaturalize them. Dash it, I'd hand them over to old Kruger. And now you'll be wanting some white ties of course. Piqué? Do you like to tie your white tie in a single knot, and tuck the end under the collar? That's a habit which is certainly growing. No doubt about it. You'd prefer the double knot? As you like. Now is there anything else you're wanting this morning? I see. Well,

dash it, do you know what I'm going to do the next time your father pays me a call? I'm going to ask him to let me fit you out. And dash it, you mark my words, he will. Your father is a man for whose abilities I have a dashed great respect, and he knew what he was doing when he sent you to Cuthbertson. Don't give another thought to it. The shirts *and* the collars *and* the ties will be with you by Thursday."

John tried the effect of them on his father that same evening at dinner.

"Good god, my boy, don't tuck the ends of your tie under the wings of your collar like that. Yes, well, if you can get into that tail-coat twenty-five years from now life will have treated you kindly. And mind you, it was only just beginning to be a little tight for me under the arms. Are you dining with these friends of yours before the opera?"

"At Romano's, I think."

"That's all right, because I shall be dining out too. Oh, and by the way I see they're not doing *Aida*. They've changed to *Traviata*. That says nothing to you?" the barrister asked.

His son shook his head.

"Do you know which tier your box is on?"

Again John shook his head.

Alexander Ogilvie was pensive for a few moments.

"I shall be in the stalls," he murmured at last.

John nodded, with as polite an assumption of interest as he could manage. Curious creatures, fathers. They always seemed to suppose that one should be impressed by that kind of information. Who wanted to know where one's father was at the theatre?

It was a spangled evening in the prime of June when Mrs Stern with John and Emil walked up from Romano's through Covent Garden, and on the cooling air the scent of crushed flowers and vegetables lingered. The traffic in the Strand sounded like the sea being left behind when one was walking back to seaside lodgings on a summer holiday morning of childhood. The market was quiet except for the jingle and clap of the hansoms over the cobbled roadway. Miriam Stern was wearing an opera-cloak of oyster-grey silk with a collar of ostrich plumes. As if to help herself up the slope she put her arm in John's with a sudden gesture of affectionate intimacy.

"John is so tremendously grown-up to-night," she turned round to say to Emil who in jacket and white waistcoat did indeed look five years younger than his friend.

The box was a small one on the top tier on the O.P. side, and when the attendant gently closed the door behind them the humdrum world was hardly imaginable in this exquisite world of make-believe, where the audience itself was but a scene in a play. The crimson curtains and valances of the boxes gave each one an air of a puppet-show, so that the figures within appeared like mechanical toys whose movements were dependent on their designer's artifice. The men could all bend over the seated ladies with an appearance of stiffly conversing. The ladies could all play with their great fans. That was the utmost they could suggest of sentient humanity. As for the people in the stalls and the gallery, they were equally unreal, and when John leaned over to see if he could distinguish his father below he quickly withdrew again to the shadow of

the box as if such an action implying an existence outside this world of make-believe were an insult to the decorum of these delicate marionettes.

"Not *Aida*," Mrs Stern was saying as she looked at her programme; and to John it seemed as if every puppet was saying the same thing, as if all the programmes in the theatre were fluttering like a myriad disturbed butterflies.

"*Traviata*," Emil added glumly. "Oh well, it doesn't matter. One's as silly as the other."

"But you know, Emil dear, I'm still old-fashioned enough to enjoy *Traviata*," and with this declaration Miriam Stern's voice died away among the quivering violins of the prelude to the first act.

If the audience had presented itself to John's fancy as unreal before the curtain went up they seemed twice as unreal when it came down again at the end of the first act, such a feverish actuality of life had palpitated on the stage, down to which he had longed to float that he might stand on a chair with one leg on the table and wine-glass in hand drink to love. And when Alfredo's voice was heard outside in the dawn, coming back to Violetta, coming back to her, John should have blessed his father and Mr Cuthbertson for abolishing his choker, such a lump was there in his throat.

*Amor, amor è palpito
dell'universo, dell'universo intero,
misterioso,
misterioso, altero, croce,
croce e delizia, delizia al cor!*

"I really think this is even stupider than *Trovatore*," Emil declared when the applause for Alfredo and Violetta was finished.

"Darling, I beg you not to make John and me feel so inferior," his mother said, with that low deep end of a laugh rather like the note of a ringdove, which was the only positive expression of mirth she ever allowed herself.

Down in the stalls, Alexander Ogilvie was telling his companion, a handsome young woman in her late twenties, with a high pompadour of light brown hair, that he had not yet been able to discover his son's whereabouts.

"And I am so longing to see him, Alec," she insisted. "You men of law are so cautious. I love the way you propose to bring him before the notice of his future stepmother."

"Well, you see, Elise, I want him . . . I want to give him our news in such a way that he'll love you. And don't talk of yourself as his stepmother, pray."

"But Alec, I shall be."

"Yes, yes, yes," the eminent barrister agreed, with that suave impatience he occasionally showed with a refractory female witness. "But in these days we are not quite so anxious to accentuate our ages."

"But seriously, Alec, isn't it time you did say something to your John? For I warn you that I am determined to be your wife in time to have most of the Long Vacation for a honeymoon."

"I know. It must be settled soon. As a matter of fact I have thought of a plan. I shall take him with me to Switzerland as soon as I can get away, and arrange the whole business. I see no reason to keep him on at school after this term. Dear me, I wish I could find him for you. Ah, there he is! The fourth box along on the top tier. My glasses are stronger than yours. He's with a rather handsome dark woman and a boy in Etons."

"But, Alec, he's adorably good-looking," she exclaimed. "Of course I won't be his stepmother. I'll be the sweetest and kindest and most sympathetic of elder sisters."

"Yes, he's a well-set-up lad. I find him a little difficult; he's wearing a dress-suit of my own," the barrister added with some unction. "It's extraordinary how long well-cut clothes last."

"And the figures of successful lawyers," observed Elise Hunter with a smile, patting Alec Ogilvie's knee. "And presently we shall see the old-fashioned father," she added as the curtain rose on the second act to display the tenor in the execrable check shooting-suit which was always donned as an indication of his '*bollenti spiriti*,' in the love-nest where he and his Violetta were living.

*Pura siccome un angelo,
Iddio mi diede una figlia.*

That was exactly the way his own father would butt in, John was thinking gloomily, as he listened to the bary-tone's moving exposition of paternal rights and watched his dignified frock-coat set off by the prodigal red roses which were tumbling in a cascade over Violetta's front gate, over the french-windows of the love-nest, over the brick wall that excluded the cruel world.

*Dite alla giovine
sì bella e pura
che' avvi una vittima
della sventura.*

John's eyes were beginning to blink the heavy tears from his lashes. Violetta's melodious renunciation was not so unlike his own renunciation of Connie. At least

it could be said in old Germont's favour that he seemed to have an inkling he was asking the unhappy young woman to make a fearful sacrifice.

By the end of the act, when Alfredo had flung the purse at Violetta's feet, John had discovered a remarkable likeness between the tenor and Arthur Dancaster.

"So much of young love in this opera," Miriam Stern sighed when the audience was murmurous again. "So much, so very much."

John nodded gravely; of this opinion he had now a right to utter a firm endorsement.

Emil shook his head.

"All this champagne and tears and roses seems to me quite incredibly sentimental and false," he declared severely. "Did people ever behave like this?"

"Did and do in essentials," his mother replied, "though the superficial behaviour may have changed."

"But what on earth has it got to do with the old gentleman if his son is having an affair with a cocotte?" Emil protested. "And why should it stand in the way of his daughter's marriage? And would any woman go on loving such an intolerable prig as Alfredo? Anyway, it's all so tawdry and novelettish and nurserymaidy."

"But so much heartache in it, my dear," Miriam Stern urged, "even if there is a good deal of sweet champagne."

"Well, of course I must look facts in the face," said her son. "And I don't see why we should go on using an anatomical arrangement for housing the passions which was exploded years ago. We call egotistical sensuality heartache and think we have somehow ennobled it thereby into something else."

"Darling, I hate to say this, but aren't you just a little young, or, if that is too insulting, just without quite all the necessary experience, to be so dogmatic on this subject?"

"That experience teaches may be a fallacy," Emil retorted. "Imagination worked upon by the experience of others such as we can always find in the great poets is probably a much more valuable tutor than the tawdry little erotic adventures with a practical experience of which an unimaginative bank-clerk is allowed to be the superior of Shakespeare or Propertius. I'll grant you, if you like, that Dumas' novel *La Dame Aux Camélias* is a chosen mirror of prostitutes, but only because it flatters them. I'll grant at the same time that the most flattering mirror must reflect partially the truth. What I will not grant is that the commonplace truth is worth reflecting and that the false flattering reflection is anything except profoundly immoral. We've outlived the right to pre-occupy ourselves emotionally with this kind of thing. We have a new age before us in which we have to pre-occupy ourselves not with individual woes but with the huge wrongs to masses. How can we listen to this sort of thing when people all over the world are starving in a world richer than it has ever been? When people . . ."

"Oh, I say, do shut up, Emil, the orchestra is beginning," John protested as the violins like aspens in a disquieting wind started the prelude to the last act.

As the lights dimmed in the front of the house Miriam saw the eye of her son's friend shining in the illumination of the stage, his lips whispering, she fancied, the poignant melody. The heartache her son disdained was hers. Let

it be foolish! But who that had once loved could keep from tears when that stage lover came back to his stage love?

*Addio del passato,
Bei sogni ridenti.*

Who after that perfect expression of a woman's farewell to life could keep from tears when she ran across the stage to that '*Violetta! O, mia Violetta! O gioia!*'?

*Parigi, o cara, noi lasceremo,
La vita, uniti, trascorreremo.
De' corsi affanni compenso avrai,
La tua salute ristorerà.*

Miriam put out her hand in the darkness of this musty old box, which at this moment was so far from the humdrum world that such a gesture lost its folly as the expression of the emotion of a woman for a boy twenty years younger than herself. Was he aware what he was doing when his brown fingers curled round her hand? Was she not the dying Violetta, he the remorseful Alfredo? Was this wise disapproving child on her right in very fact her child, fruit of what the humdrum world would have presumed to be a reasonable, an appropriate passion? Was he not aware, that other on her left, whose fingers were making her hand faint, her heart thud, her blood swirl, her lids droop hot and dry over aching eyes, must he not be aware of what his clasp was meaning to her? Suddenly, the musty box, the last poignant scene of the opera, the dim audience below like pebbles, all were obliterated by a memory of that scene when Anna Karenina gives herself and of that cruel sentence in which

Tolstoi conjures the undignified appearance of Anna Karenina in passion's dishevelment and disarray. . . .

GOD SAVE OUR GRACIOUS QUEEN . . .

"Well, I never enjoyed anything as much as that," John was declaring provocatively to Emil.

"You're very easily pleased then," was the retort.

Jogging back to Hampstead in the brougham Mrs Stern had hired for that evening John asked if she would mind reading a story he had written and telling him what she thought about it. He had decided during the performance of *La Traviata* to be a writer.

"But I must be careful," Miriam Stern was saying to herself. "Nothing is more fatal to dignity than playing Egeria to a boy twenty years younger than oneself."

John had been home half an hour when he heard his father's hansom drive up. Drawing upon the accumulated emotion of *Traviata* he had been adding a sentence here and there to his short story. He pushed the manuscript out of sight in a blotter as the smoke of his father's cigar reached the library from the hall below.

"Ah, there you are. I saw you in the box."

"Did you? I didn't see you."

Alexander Ogilvie's handsome prosperous-seeming face fell slightly. All the way back he had been counting on his son's saying he had seen him, possibly even saying he had seen him with a lady, upon which he was going to announce that the lady was Miss Elise Hunter.

'She's the daughter of Sir William Hunter, one of the Lords Justices of Appeal, you know. And, as a matter of fact, I've recently . . . she has done me the honour . . . she and I became engaged to be married last week . . . it's not yet announced. . . . I wanted to tell you first before the public announcement was made.'

It had sounded easy when the hansom was taking its leisurely course up Fitzjohn's Avenue. But here and now in this room it was impossible. Here and now Athene was sitting in that armchair, and the very pattern of the Morris cretonne with which it was covered was hardly faded yet. The speckled breasts of the thrushes were as clear as ever among the leaves, the strawberries they were stealing as rich a red. As for his son, he had shrunk from the slim youth whose father's tail-coat so well became him to a little boy in a sailor-suit sitting beside her on that very footstool and listening large-eyed to her reading for him the story of Big Claus and Little Claus.

"Oh, you didn't see me?"

"No, I would have waved. I enjoyed *Traviata* most awfully."

"Yes, it keeps its charm. Have a cigar?"

John wondered if his father had taken to himself the lesson from Germont's behaviour in the opera. He had never offered him even a cigarette before. Or was he going mad?

"Thanks."

"A whisky and soda?"

"No, thanks."

"I've been thinking about your future," Alexander Ogilvie announced. "Are you still without plans for a career?"

John became cautious. Could his father have discovered anything about that story he had written?

"I'd rather not decide anything definite just yet. I wish I could leave school, that's all," said John.

"As a matter of fact," his father went on, "I've been thinking lately that perhaps in your case St James's has outlived its utility. Of course, you can't go up to the University next October; but I was wondering whether you would not like to try a year abroad—in France or Germany, or perhaps best of all Switzerland. And it occurred to me that we might go out to Switzerland and fix something up. I want to get away by July. I need a holiday. Once you have made up your mind to leave, you need not wait for the formal end of term."

It must have been the effect of old Germont's penitence in the last act, John decided. Some strong emotional shock was the only explanation of this sudden outburst of paternal common sense.

"Do you really mean I can leave school this term?" he gasped.

"Yes, yes. I've thought out what would be most useful for you."

John exhaled in a long sigh of contentment the smoke of that cigar which was the tangible pledge of comparative freedom. His father eyed him. Was not this the moment to announce his marriage? It was ridiculous to be feeling apologetic—quite ridiculous. It was worse than ridiculous: it was cowardly.

"I have been meaning to tell you, John, for some time now that I am going . . ."

To a father who had at last comprehended what he was enduring from the bondage of school John owed an

affectionate attention. He gave it, looking at his father with his mother's eyes. Alexander Ogilvie could not complete the announcement. He stammered:

"That I am going to take silk," he substituted. "There are disadvantages of course, but I have considered the matter very carefully from every point of view, and if I make up my mind to contest a parliamentary seat . . ." He broke off with a forensic gesture.

"I didn't know you were interested in politics."

"Liberalism is bound to revive. There will probably be a General Election this autumn, and the country will give the Conservatives enough rope to hang themselves for the General Election after."

"I didn't even know that you were a Liberal."

Alexander Ogilvie might have replied that he had not been perfectly convinced himself that he was a Liberal until he realized what a number of barristers of his own standing were Unionists.

"Oh yes, I've always been a Liberal; but of course my work at the Bar has not given me much opportunity for serious politics."

"When actually do you think I shall leave . . . I mean when are you going to Switzerland?"

"By the end of the month; but you'll want to get fitted out, and so I think you may as well leave at the end of next week."

John felt that without the slightest absurdity he could sing *Jubilate Deo* in this room like a tenor on the stage of Covent Garden. When he laid his head on the pillow life was whirling round in his brain, a wheel of coloured fire: but Connie's face had never been so dim.

The Dulford match was on the next day, and John went

down to the school ground to indulge himself in the pleasure of thinking while he watched it that this might easily be the last school match he should ever watch. He tried to beat up a little sentiment when he found himself with a large bag of cherries and a small group of friends lolling at ease in the shade of an elm-tree to watch the batting of the School Eleven.

"Oh, nicely, sir! Run it out."

"If Alan Merivale's batting comes on next year as much as it has this year, he may get his blue when he goes up to the Varsity."

"I shan't be here to see. I'm leaving school next week."

John's announcement caused a sensation. One of his friends swallowed a cherry-stone under the shock.

"Good god, Judge, you haven't been given the boot, have you?"

"No, you fat ass; I'm going to Switzerland with my governor. It was settled last night. Oh, well hit, sir! That was a damned ripping cut."

The grace of the stroke and the speed of the ball spinning over the level green toward the boundary between long slip and third man expressed his own ease of mind. That was the way *he* would be travelling presently. Could it be true? Could it really be true? Eighteen next October. It was only during the nineteenth century that such an age had come to seem young. In the past some men by eighteen had lived a fuller life than to-day most people lived by eighty. Everything to-day was directed towards retarding the few in the supposed interest of the many. The Boers were probably an unpleasant lot of Bible-thumpers, but they had a right to their own country and they were not likely to be any

pleasanter when incorporated in the British Empire. Why should the Irish be denied the right even to separate themselves absolutely from the United Kingdom if by doing so they believed they could work out their own destiny as a nation?

And why should the individual be sacrificed to the type? Why should anybody who was not eccentric and who on the whole adapted himself to the common life of a public school be compelled to endure that existence more years than were necessary because for the sake of uniformity it was agreed that the education of a schoolboy of a certain social class should last till he was eighteen, unless he chose a profession like the Navy which only relieved him of one bondage to inflict another? Well, by the fortunate whim of his father he had a chance of freedom, and if he allowed himself to be enslaved again he deserved nothing better than slavery.

Five more days of school, five more days of half-past nine to one o'clock and three o'clock to five, five more days of Greek particles and Latin deponent verbs, five more days of varnished lockers and swinging glass-doors and tickless clocks and blue sky beheld over the housetops from the windows of sunless classrooms, five more days of seeing every morning the plaster cast of Laocoön and his sons caught in the coils of the serpent and as powerless to escape as the victims of conventional education who hurried past them to hours of festering boredom, five more days of seven hundred boys, scarcely half a dozen of whom had any deeper meaning in one's life than the people in a crowded train and yet to whose prejudices and taboos and stock opinions one had submitted for nine slow years, for twenty-seven crawling terms, for

eighty-one creeping months . . . and for about two thousand five hundred dragging days.

"Are you counting Merivale's score, Judge? He must be near his fifty."

A burst of clapping from the pavilion indicated that the fifty was accomplished.

"This will be my last school match," John observed.

"You are a lucky —!"

But the ejaculation was not uttered with any passion. It was as conventional as a New Year's greeting. They were mildly bored, yes, these people lolling under the elms and eating cherries; but give them their freedom, and they would not know what to do with it.

John sat in the shade until stumps were drawn, with St James's victorious for the first time since the summer term when John was twelve years old.

The victory gave him satisfaction, and he was a little annoyed by Fitzgerald's contemptuous reception of the news when he called at his house in Trelawny Road.

"The public-school spirit is a grand thing for the Union Jack, my boy, but as I spit on the Union Jack I don't give a twopenny damn whether the good little boys of Dulford beat the good little boys of St James's or the other way round."

"What's beating the other side got to do with the public-school spirit, you ass? I might just as well call your desire to beat England the public-school spirit."

"That's reality. Cricket is make believe."

"I shan't argue with you this afternoon, because I'm leaving school next week and going to Switzerland."

This news at any rate made a welcome impression.

"The hell you are! I wonder when we will meet again, or if we ever will meet again."

"I'm not going away for ever."

"Not in the flesh, Judge, perhaps; but when you come back you'll probably be further away from me than if you had stayed in Switzerland. I'll be having no time for cricket."

"Nor shall I."

"You'll be playing mental cricket, Judge. That's the kind I mean. I believe in two causes—my Church and my country. To both I can give something, because they are both vital. I don't need to look around for romance to spice things up. If I had lived two hundred years ago I would have been a practical Jacobite, not for the sake of any damned Stuarts, but because I should have seen in their victory the victory of my Church and the freedom of my country. What are you doing to make anything out of Jacobitism nowadays? It's just keepsake stuff. When we sing 'We are the boys of Wexford' we sing it because we are still the boys of Wexford or Wicklow or Kerry or Cork. I am determined to die for Ireland if my death will help her, and that means I probably shall die, because I know that when the test comes I shall know that if I have the courage to die Ireland will have the courage to live. But you, even if you were ready to die, could do nothing for Scotland. I'm assuming, you see, that you will presently carry your Jacobitism to the logical conclusion. Maybe I'm allowing you more intelligence than you're entitled to. Maybe you'll just potter along like old Fenwick round the corner or spend the rest of your life sitting on an addled egg. But if you do get a step nearer to reality and apply your Jacobitism practically,

you'll still never actually attain reality, because your fellow-countrymen would regard your death as an unrealistic act, and despise you as much as . . . well, perhaps not quite so much, as we Irish despise the Scotch. But, begod, Judge, why do you let me talk this damned rot? Have a good time in Switzerland. I wish you were Irish. I would have enjoyed fighting beside you one day. And I wish you were a Catholic. But that's not for selfish reasons."

John's eyelids pricked. He would have explained his emotion as an involuntary expression of sentimental regret, against which nobody was always secure. Yet when less than a month hence he lolled in the cool grass of an Alpine pasture watching the Eiger, the Mettenberg, and the Wetterhorn between him and that receding world of school the figure of Fitzgerald remained as clearly cut as those snowy peaks, as fine and predominant and complete as they were, and the thought of him on the other side of the mountains was again sharp enough to draw a tear, but it was the tear that Blake calls 'an intellectual thing.' The thought of Emil Stern on the other side of the mountains did not affect him like the thought of Fitz. Emil was as incomplete as himself, and the fancy of their joint development was sufficient to destroy the menace of separation uttered by these impassive heartbreaking mountains. With Fitz there could never again be perfect intimacy because Fitz would henceforth dwell apart within the crystal of his chosen purpose. How Emil would scoff at such a description! Petrification, he would call it, or even putrefaction! John smiled at the memory of Emil's indignation against the people who refused to welcome the twentieth century as a liberator of mankind.

"Thousands and thousands of people must be waking up every morning with a question," he had said on that evening when John had gone round to make his farewells. "And that question is 'Why, when the world is richer than it has ever been should there be a single human being without the absolute security of food and shelter?' People like that gawky Irish lout Fitzgerald annoy me. What does he expect to make of this independent Ireland? What does he want to make of it?"

"I don't think he feels it's his job to answer that question," John had replied. "His job is by action to make it possible for others to answer that question. He would argue that no nation can work out its destiny so long as it is a nation within a nation."

"We've had enough of this idiotic nationalism based on artificial geographical boundaries," Emil had declared. "The Jews have been landless for centuries, and in spite of that, in spite of being politically subject all the time, they remain the most positive expression of nationality anywhere. I have often thought that if I were a Christian my strongest argument for the divinity of Jesus Christ would be the survival of the Jews."

It had been just after Emil had said this that his mother had come in with the manuscript of John's story and invited him to go up to that grey drawing-room and hear what she thought about it.

"It's just as good as I had expected it would be, John. And just as bad," she had added quickly. "But you needn't be discouraged by that, because nobody of your age has ever succeeded in writing a really good story."

And she had criticized it in detail without in the least depressing the spirits of the author, who having outlived

the emotion which had inspired his tale already thought it preposterous.

"It's ghastly," he declared. "I can't imagine why I gave it to you to read. It's absolutely ghastly."

"It's just a dream of the night before which seems wonderful until it is told," Mrs Stern had commented. "However, as you are so well able to see that it does not convey what you intend to convey, you need not worry. The difficulty of most artists is to dissociate themselves from their work quickly enough to judge it. The original impulse which prompted them to put pen to paper or brush to canvas continues with a kind of reflex action and destroys the detachment. If ever a day should come when you re-read your own love-letters you will get the full effect of what I mean."

"You don't think there's anything in this story to show that I might some day write well?"

"Nothing at all, John. If you are an authentic poet you will, indeed you must, soon be singing a few authentic notes. It is safe to say that nobody who has not written some great poetry before he is twenty-four will ever write any great poetry. I am not aware of a single exception. On the other hand very few people have written even good prose by that age. Nobody can tell a boy of seventeen that he is likely to be a good novelist or a good dramatist or a good historian. Every boy obviously capable of imaginative development is a potential writer of prose, and the accidents of experience will determine the issue. Have you fallen in love yet?"

"I was in love when I wrote this story."

"Tell me about it. That is if you wouldn't mind."

So he had told Mrs Stern about Connie.

"And she preferred the young actor man? Poor John! But she would have been a very unnatural girl if she hadn't . . . don't look so mortified, my dear; young women of nineteen have as great a horror of making themselves look ridiculous as young men of seventeen. And your Connie couldn't have allowed herself to be enchanted by a stripling nearly two years younger than herself. Don't be afraid, John. You will never be unlucky in love, if to be lucky means to have many women falling in love with you. Whether you will be happy I will not prophesy. We shall miss you when you are gone."

A strange thing, but he could remember the exact tone in which she had made that last simple statement. And remembering it here in this flowery Alpine meadow it seemed to sound from over the other side of those mountains like a phrase of music at the end of a long piece. 'We shall miss you when you are gone.' As if with that she had quietly closed the lid of the piano.

John took from his pocket a letter he had received this morning from Mrs Stern, written with a fine hand upon crackling foreign notepaper:

'I wonder how you are enjoying Switzerland. It is to me the dreariest country in Europe, but I never came to it fresh as you have come to it with all the thrill of being abroad for the first time. I think of it in winter like a stale wedding-cake, and in summer like a soggy badly dressed salad. I abhor mountains. I abhor too the condition everybody is in of going somewhere to see something and the strictly honest predacity of the Swiss themselves. I abhor the chalets as much as I abhor the melancholy firs which provide the wood for them. And

*the cuckoo clocks of Lucerne! And the cow-bells of the Rigi and the inevitable mist on Pilatus! And the German tourists with knapsacks waiting for the next boat at some lakeside jetty and the English spinsters sitting in the sun (when there is any sun) at Interlaken! Oh, and the waterfall at Mürren which was always en plus grande tenue yesterday. But perhaps the flowers have bloomed for you, John, as brightly as they bloomed for Proserpine before she was carried below by Pluto. I should like them to do that, John. I should like you to have such exquisite weather that for the rest of your life you could recapture the picture of an Alpine meadow in the sunlight, painted with flowers more prodigally than Botticelli's *Primavera*. My picture is of an English meadow full of buttercups and surrounded by hawthorn which I saw from the window of the train travelling down from Hull the day we landed from Poland when I was a girl. That was in 1872. I was nine years old.'*

John put the letter away and turned to another written by Hetty on thick paper in her sprawling hand. No wonder there had been excess postage to pay:

'I'm rather worried about Connie. She says nothing about Arthur, but I met Ellen Fitzgerald the other day, and she told me she had heard that Arthur Dancaster had left the company. I've heard from other people how unreliable he is. Poor Connie, I'm afraid she's going to be unhappy. Ellen Fitzgerald was very excited because at last she has got a half-promise of an engagement on tour. Everything is the same as usual here. Father and Mother both ask to be remembered to you. I wonder

when we shall see you again, or if we ever shall see you again. If you write to Connie don't say anything about what I have told you.'

So few weeks ago, and the news in this letter of Hetty's would have agitated him intolerably. Now she and Connie and Arthur Dancaster were so utterly lost behind these towering mountains that they meant nothing.

John walked back to the hotel where he found his father at tea on the big rustic wooden balcony surrounded by English spinsters whose looped-up skirts and straw hats tied round with grey veils showed their expeditionary status. They had in fact just returned from the ascent of the Faulhorn, a steep and a very long walk but hardly a climb, and they were still in a state of astonishment at their own daring, tired but voluble. The eminent barrister was being urged not to leave Grindelwald until he had enjoyed a comparable adventure.

"You must be able to say you've done a little mountaineering, Mr Ogilvie," one spinster was insisting as John reached the tea-table.

Two or three guides hanging about in front of the hotel were a silent reproof to his lack of initiation.

"What about the glaciers to-morrow, John?" his father asked breezily.

"Oh, you'll have to be roped for the glaciers," two spinsters ejaculated simultaneously. "We did the glaciers last year."

"I'm sure young Mr Ogilvie will enjoy that," another spinster declared. "Of course we were not roped today on the Faulhorn. Apparently one never is. But we started at four o'clock this morning, and I don't think you'll have to start before nine. So I'm afraid you'll miss the sunrise. And don't, please don't miss the Eismeer, the *mer de glace*, you know."

Alexander Ogilvie had made several attempts to tell his son about his forthcoming marriage during the various excursions they had made together on this holiday; but at the last moment he had always decided to postpone it for a more appropriate occasion. He hoped that the high solitudes about the glaciers would provide such an occasion. So they did, although not quite in the way he had expected. He and John were eating their sandwiches beside a narrow path bordered with the small crimson rhododendrons called Alpine roses. The guide was eating his lunch some yards ahead. Behind them rose the Wetterhorn. Opposite across the disappointingly dirty mass of the glacier towered the precipices of the Mettenberg and the Schreckhorn beyond, dense mist obscuring them at no great height. The day which had been clear and bright when they started had darkened over. Suddenly there was a roar from the Mettenberg which seemed to be answered from behind by another roar from the Wetterhorn.

"Avalanches," the guide observed.

The barrister asked if they were perfectly safe where they sat. The guide nodded, with a smile. A third tremendous roar sounded from the Mettenberg; plunging out of the mist, a flocculent mass of snow came drumming down the precipices.

"It is not for us," the guide assured them.

"Still, I think the weather doesn't look too good," Alexander Ogilvie insisted. "And really from where we are we can see all we want to see of the glacier."

The guide bowed politely, but in his silence there was the suggestion of a contemptuous politeness. At this moment a call came thinly up from below.

"Somebody in trouble," said Alexander Ogilvie. "You'd better go down and see what's the matter. We'll wait for you here."

The call was heard again. The guide picked up his coil of rope and set off.

"I hope it's nothing serious," John said to his father, who seemed to be looking anxiously after the figure of the guide on his way down through the Alpine roses toward the glacier, but who was saying to himself that this was the moment to tell his son what he had brought him all the way to Switzerland to tell.

"John, I want to talk to you about the future. The thing is this. Before I came away I decided to marry again."

"To marry again?" John gasped. He felt as if his father had given him a sharp push and that he had only saved himself from hurtling over the edge by a desperate effort of equilibrium.

"It's not such a very unusual step to take," Alexander Ogilvie snapped.

"No, I suppose not," John agreed in a dazed voice.

"As a matter of fact, had you seen me that night at Covent Garden you would have seen . . ." The barrister paused. It seemed ridiculous to call Elise at twenty-seven the future stepmother of a boy of seventeen. And 'my

'future wife' sounded pompous. "You would have seen Elise. She is a charming young woman. Well, of course naturally I should not be proposing to marry her if she were not. She is a daughter of Sir William Hunter, one of the Lords Justices of Appeal. I know you will like her. Still, it is always difficult at first. It makes for self-consciousness. Naturally, if I had met her before . . . but it was all very sudden. I mean there was really no opportunity for you to get to know one another before we became engaged. I perfectly understand that this news may be a shock to you. Still, your mother would understand. But, as I say, I can perfectly realize that you may be surprised. And for that reason I thought you would welcome the chance of being away. I don't want you to feel bound to stay abroad for a bit, but I thought I would give you the opportunity. I'm assuming that you will go up to Oxford next year. But I wish you to choose for yourself. When you are twenty-one you will inherit your mother's money. Not a great deal. About four hundred pounds a year. Still, that means independence up to a point, and it lies with you whether you make of it the foundation for a genuine independence. Your various masters have always agreed that you had plenty of brains if you should ever make up your mind to use them. And certainly I've never found you anything except intelligent."

Alexander Ogilvie waited for his son to say something.

"Aren't you going to wish me happiness?" he asked at last when John remained silent.

"Well, of course I wish you that."

"Then do, my dear boy, try to get rid of that bewildered expression which is not very encouraging."

"It was rather a shock," John explained. "You seem so old to be marrying again."

"Old?" his father repeated indignantly. "Why, good heavens, my dear boy, I'm not so much over forty-five. Really, I did suppose you were old enough yourself by now to have some sense of proportion. I thought I'd made it clear to you lately that I no longer considered you a child. I'm really anxious that we should get to know one another. Perhaps it's mostly my fault that we don't know each other better. After your mother died I buried myself in my work. And you were too young to understand what I was feeling."

John began to behold himself like a personage in a chromolithograph . . . a chromolithographic landscape . . . a chromolithographic father and son . . . chromolithographic sentiment . . .

The guide came back to say that an English tourist had sprained his ankle in slipping down one of the séracs on the glacier. If the *herren* were serious in not wishing to go further, would they mind his helping the other party. The path back to the hotel was unmistakable. If however they had changed their minds and now desired to complete the expedition the injured tourist could be made comfortable until help arrived.

. . . And now a chromolithographic accident, with chromolithographic mists swirling above the glacier, and an absolutely realistic rain beginning to fall. . . .

Alexander Ogilvie bade the guide go back and do what he could. The day was spoiling up here and he and the young *herr* could easily find their way home.

John was grateful for the narrowness of the path through the Alpine roses. It meant walking in single file,

and nobody can hold forth when walking in single file. By the time the path was wider the descent was much steeper, which was another impediment to anything except disjointed remarks. It was somewhat absurdly vain for his father to be huffy at his suggestion that he was too old to be marrying again.

"I'll never be a father," John vowed to himself. To spend half one's time in impressing a son how young he was compared with oneself, and the other half in trying to convince him that one was hardly older than he was, that was being a father. No thanks!

"Being a father is the most damned undignified position there is," he told himself. "Especially when a father is well known. Somebody will murder a wretched woman this summer either because in the hot weather she gets on his nerves, or because the weather is so wet that the problem of his domestic entanglements will depress him beyond bearing. Then the distinguished pleader Mr Alexander Ogilvie will be called in to charm the jury into deciding that the wretched man is innocent. Yet the distinguished pleader himself, whose fine profile and rich voice could conspire to keep a man alive, is frightened to tell his own son that he is going to marry again, so frightened that he has brought him all the way from Hampstead to the Grindelwald glaciers to reveal his secret, his chromolithographic secret. What a problem picture for the Royal Academy! The two of them sitting there among the Alpine roses, and the public guessing what they were saying to one another.

"I wish I'd seen this woman he's going to marry."

Poised upon the tussock of grass down to which he had just leapt, John looked back to where his father in a tweed

Norfolk jacket and a well-cut pair of breeches was descending more sedately the lower slopes.

"Is your future wife fair or dark?" he asked courteously.

"Elise! Elise!" his father corrected him, in the irritable voice of one who having solved a puzzle at last to his own satisfaction does not want to be reminded of his former perplexity. "For heaven's sake, my dear boy, do get into your head that she's not even ten years older than yourself."

"Well, is Elise fair or dark?"

"She's fair. Very fair in fact."

John was relieved. There would be nobody to sit in his mother's chair and perhaps at last completely obliterate the image of her he still held in his mind's eye, that image whose clarity of outline time was beginning to blur already. But if Elise was fair. . . . Elise the fair, Elise the lovable, Elise the lily maid of Astolat. Perhaps a premonition of what was to happen had made his mother read to him so often that idyll of Lancelot and Elaine.

It was raining hard now. John had bounded ahead again, and he beckoned to his father to hurry to the shelter of some spruces. As he ran wet ox-eyed daisies whipped round his ankles. Wet ox-eyed daisies? Walks with his mother through wet ox-eyed daisies in that dripping summer of 1888? Or was it 1889? He bent down to pluck one now. Just as tough as they used to seem. And that bittersweet daisy smell. And that golden smear of pollen. And she had worn a dress too of warm brown velvet embroidered on the smocked breast with yellow daisies in silk. That was still vivid in his mind's eye, though her face was growing dim. Even on memory the inanimate object made a more perdurable impression

than the most beloved human creature. Yes, that was still vivid, and vivid too the daisy pattern of the Morris wallpaper in the drawing-room of that house in Westminster, the daisy paper, and the myrtle paper on the landing outside, and the honeysuckle paper in her bedroom. But she, she was growing dim.

His father reached the shelter of the spruces.

"I'm afraid I must have sounded rather stupid up there," said John. "It was a surprise. But I do wish you happiness."

Chromolithographic speeches now.

Alexander Ogilvie shook his son's hand.

"You'll find a friend in Elise. And I'm sure you understand that I was thinking chiefly of you when I gave you this opportunity to get away from Hampstead. It's pouring. We'd better wait under these trees. I think it's only a shower. The sun's shining on the valley."

Bright as the green of a pre-Raphaelite palette . . . the Blind Girl of Millais . . . the river-banks above his Ophelia. . . .

"I thought we'd move on to Geneva to-morrow, and then look at that place near Montreux. But mind you, John, be frank about it. If you'd rather go somewhere else, say so."

At the hotel in Geneva a telegram was waiting for Alexander Ogilvie.

"Elise has to be operated upon for perityphlitis! I must get back to London at once. You can stay on in Geneva until you hear from me. We'll settle what is to be done when I get back to England. I must catch the night train. Poor child, poor child, who would have dreamt of such a disaster?"

A few hours later, John was sitting on a bench beside the silver lake, dazed by a sudden excess of freedom, with twenty pounds crackling in his pocket. He was like a character in a fairy-tale to whom a supernatural being had promised the granting of three wishes and who could not decide what he wanted. He got up and strolled along the lakeside until beneath a double line of trees heavily trimmed in the continental fashion to form an overarching canopy he saw chairs and tables set out, none of them occupied. John took a seat at one of the tables. Presently a waiter came out of a small café on the other side of the road to attend to his commands. In the self-consciousness of youth John ordered the first drink with a familiar name on the list of beverages. It happened to be maraschino. The pleasure of being able to sit at ease beside the moonlit lake of Geneva and order what he liked to drink was slightly marred by the syrupy liqueur he had chosen, which tasted like glycerine decanted from a bug-hunter's poison-bottle. He began to fancy that the waiter was laughing at him, and defiantly called for a second glass of the sickly stuff fit for nothing except to counteract the acid of fruit. He liked the second glass no better than the first, but in order to impress on the waiter how well he was accustomed to sitting like this under the trees and contemplating over maraschino the murmurous promenaders of a summer's night, he called for a third glass. The world expanded. The nocturnal sky deepened to a richer sapphirine. The mountains on the other side of the silver lake were floating toward the moon. The passers-by bent over to one another in their sauntering to speak the words that poets

give to lovers. The very arc-lamps along the boulevard fizzed melodiously, and the waiter's napkin and apron were draperies better graced than by the marble of Praxiteles. Three glasses of maraschino had set the world in John's hand like a king's orb. He waved his sceptre—a wangee cane—to the waiter, and in a mood of profound magnanimity, of infinite benevolence, with a head as light as a moth, he wandered off. Presently a tall dark woman who had been leaning idly over the parapet along the lake perceived the slim figure in grey flannel and came undulating towards him.

"Bon soir, ma petite poupée d'amour," she began.

But John was alarmed by this Lilith in sequins and seeing a large well-lighted building opposite he hurried across the road and passed into what proved to be the Kursaal. Catching sight of himself in a wide mirror on the wall of the entrance lobby, he stopped in surprise to observe what he could not but think was the extraordinary advance he had made since he had put the Channel between him and school. To himself he admitted that Bunting's well-cut flannel suit and Henry Heath's light grey Trilby hat were chiefly responsible for this magnificently worldly appearance. In those days what was called most politely the Homburg hat, more vulgarly the Trilby, and most vulgarly something else, at once differentiated the wearer of it in England from the respectable bourgeois who never wore anything except a bowler or straw hat on week-days and a top-hat on Sundays. Certainly, the Prince of Wales often wore a Homburg hat, but such headgear on his royal head was associated with baccarat in the minds of his mother's middle-class admirers. That every suburban corner-boy would be wearing such a hat twenty years

hence was then no more imaginable than the bathing-undresses of the future.

The combination of three maraschinos with the effect of the Trilby hat observed in the mirror, and a slight feeling that his running away from the woman in sequins had been a cowardly piece of boyishness, determined John to be as grown-up as he looked. Money was crackling in his pocket. This was the moment to gamble. He watched for awhile the players round the *petits chevaux*. It did not seem a difficult game. The man next him had put down three five-franc pieces running on the even numbers and won fifteen francs. John flung down a five-franc piece on the odd numbers. 'Cinq!' John, who was expecting to receive five francs saw his money raked in by the croupier, and not only his money but all the money on the table except what actually stood in the square marked with a five. By the time John had discovered that five was the bank's number, a kind of super-zero, he had got rid of all his small cash. This was the moment when the strong-minded gambler went home, and John was very nearly weak enough to be strong-minded. Then he pulled himself together. He was abroad. He was his own master. He had more money in his pocket than he had ever had in his life. What were the seventeen francs he had lost? Unlucky in love, lucky at cards. He went over to the cashier's desk and changed a five-pound note for twenty-five yellow counters and some insignificant pieces of silver and copper. It was as easy as Tiddleywinks to play with counters. One had more courage for staking. Indeed, John had so much courage that in ten minutes every single yellow counter had vanished. The next twenty-five lasted longer. At one time

they had become as many as fifty-four, and then he made the mistake of counting up how much he had won. That brought the inevitable bad luck, and it was necessary to change his third five-pound note, because it would be silly to go away and leave the damned bank two hundred and sixty francs the better of him. The new set of counters vanished with absurd rapidity owing to the unprecedented run on the even numbers. That could not happen again. John changed his last five-pound note. Just as he had expected, the odd numbers were asserting themselves. Moreover, he managed to choose the very moment to change and back the even numbers again. He must have almost won back his third five-pound note, but he would not make the mistake of counting this time. He heard a woman next him at the table whisper to her companion:

“Regarde, chérie, le petit auprès de moi. Il a l’air d’un gosse qu’on régale avec des bonbons. Regarde ses grands yeux bleus. Il est joli comme un amour.”

John turned round to show a scowl of disapproval at the utterer of this objectional gush.

“Regarde, regarde!” she urged her companion, with a ripple of merriment, “veux-tu regarder l’homme sauvage?”

John flamed at this badinage from a woman he suspected of being a tart. In trying to concentrate more intensely upon the whirling horses to protect his dignity, he found he had inadvertently left a counter on the seven, which won and set him on the way to winning back his second five pounds. He had not hitherto been backing single horses, but now that his luck had turned this was obviously the policy to pursue. He pursued it, and was very soon deep into his last five pounds. This made him cautious again, and for ten minutes he fought a losing

battle with the odd and even numbers. At last he was left with a single yellow counter. He placed it on the seven. Seven was his lucky number. The mistake he had made was in not sticking to seven all the time. He might have doubled his capital by now. With forty pounds he could really begin to live.

"Huit!"

John walked out of the Kursaal. In going in he had noticed his flushed complexion and wondered if it was not a little on the girlish side. No need to bother about that any longer. He was now as pale as Hamlet. And his lips were trembling in a most disconcerting way. Thank heaven he was entirely alone and out of reach of sympathy. To-morrow he would have to use the five or six francs left to send a telegram to his father. Or would it be in the tradition to go boldly back into the Kursaal and stake them in a last desperate throw on seven? But an end had come to John's sense of controlling the world. In fact he could not sleep for a long time, wondering all the while as he turned over and over in his hotel bed whether six francs and twenty centimes would pay for a telegram to London. An optimistic solution finally presented itself and allowed him to rest. He would summon up enough sang-froid in the morning to ask the head-waiter to send the telegram and put it down on the bill. Then he began to spend the money he would have won if he had only stuck to the seven, and in this agreeable mental occupation he fell asleep.

To John's relief next morning the hotel porter did not seem to expect payment for the telegram:

*When you write please send twenty pounds money
unfortunately lost*

John decided that the adverb 'unfortunately,' adequate though it was as a qualification of the verb 'lost,' had better be amplified in a letter. He decided at the same time that the wisest amplification would be the exact truth.

It was on Wednesday when John sent off the telegram. He might reasonably expect an answer by Friday, and at the latest by Saturday. With only six francs and twenty centimes in his pocket he was unable to do anything more exciting than walk about Geneva and smoke not too many cigarettes. Geneva at this date could claim to be the dullest city of its size in Europe, and that John should have managed to find it a step in the conventional rake's progress was remarkable. However, his wandering about undistinguished architecture and dreary museums took him no farther along the primrose path that week. There was no letter on Friday. That was perhaps to be expected. There was no letter on Saturday or Sunday either, and when on Monday the hotel porter told him there was still no letter John fancied that there was a suspicious gleam in the porter's bilious eyes. Tuesday found John without a letter and without a sou in his pockets. The porter's information on Wednesday that there was still no letter seemed to possess menacing curttness, and when John went up to his room before lunch his apprehensions of unpleasantness were intensified by seeing on his dressing-table the bill for the week:

Pension	56.00
Telegramme	8.50
	<u>64.50</u>

Sixty-four francs! The spidery writing made him feel

more than ever that he was caught in an inescapable web. Sixty-four francs! Lunch was flavourless: the afternoon walk round Geneva was more depressing than ever. Sixty-four francs! All the faces of head-porters seemed puckered with appraising greed, but the face of the head-porter at the Hotel X—— was the most coldly acquisitive of any. When John was wandering around out of doors the ordeal of passing his desk on the way into the hotel again became an obsession, and when on Friday the porter anticipated his question by informing him that there was no letter for him, John was convinced by the tone of his voice that he was being regarded as an impostor. This conviction was strengthened by the attitude of the manager, a small man with sandy hair in a frock-coat much too large for him.

"Good morning, Mistaire Ogilvie."

"Good morning."

"Pardon, but the account was in order, yes?"

"Quite in order."

"Thank you. I was just wishing to know, not for to trouble you."

It was all very well for that sandy-haired little brute to rub his hands and smirk and bow like that, but why ask about those sixty-four francs unless he was getting anxious about them? What on earth could his father mean by not sending the money? Perhaps he would have been wiser to invent a story about the lost twenty pounds, instead of telling the truth.

Saturday arrived. There was still no letter. John had begun to feel by now that all the employees of the hotel were aware of his pennilessness. The chambermaid appeared to bustle round his room with a petticoat-

swishing contempt for its occupant. The valet gave the impression of dropping his boots outside his door as if he were flinging stones at a beggar. The waiter seemed to serve him long after everybody else and to bring him the least appetizing portions. Even the pageboy, whose job it was to open the door for outgoing and incoming guests managed, to John's fancy, to open the door for himself with a suggestion of insolence. By Tuesday evening he knew that he could not face the presentation of the second week's bill on Wednesday morning. He made up his mind after dinner to go out and not return to the hotel.

It was not so bad the first night. The weather was warm and fine. John had eaten a good dinner in spite of the imagined inattention of the waiter. He dozed fitfully on one of the benches beside the lake after he had tired himself out by walking about for hours. It was less pleasant in the morning to wake up feeling grubby and stiff, and by the afternoon when hunger had been added to grubbiness and stiffness it was definitely unpleasant, so unpleasant that he felt inclined to brave the looks of the manager and the staff and return to the hotel. By dusk the thought of dinner and bed was overwhelming; but he resisted the impulse to surrender, and walked about again until he was sufficiently exhausted to sit down on a bench and fall asleep. He woke at dawn grubbier, stiffer, hungrier, and cold now into the bargain, for a chill wind was blowing across the lake from the mountains. By eight o'clock it was raining. It was too early to find shelter in one of the museums. He decided to go to church. The first church he tried was locked up. So was the second. The third was a Catholic church in which Mass

was being said. The congregation was made up of poor people. Thirty-six hours without food or bed had reduced John to a condition in which he could learn his first real lesson in humility. Hitherto he had pitied poor people because they lacked something material he himself possessed. Now sitting in grubbiness, stiffness, hunger and cold, he envied them their possession of something spiritual which he lacked. He wished he could share in this worship. He wished he understood what the faint click and tinkle of the rosaries signified, what the mysterious gestures and movements before the altar signified. A compelling conviction that he was nearer than he had ever been to truth struck him sharply. It was a positively physical experience like being stabbed by a dagger. Never once before had a religious service or ceremony affected him with the sense that behind it was reality. Going to church had been like going to school, a disciplinary demand made upon one's freedom for the sake of a theoretical benefit. Religious instruction had been a part of the hebdomadal round like Roman history or the gymnasium. Now in this dingy church smelling of damp stone and damp people, of stale incense, wax-candles and dusty draperies, he found added to his bodily hunger a hunger of the mind. Those who have experienced hunger know that the bitterest pang is caused not by the sight or smell of food, but by the sight of other people eating. It is this which rouses anger and despair at what seem the irrational conditions of material existence. John had already been tormented by the cruel absurdity of watching people eat merely because they had in their pockets a few pieces of metal which he lacked. He was now tormented by the thought of his exclusion from the

intimacy of this common worship. He was in a state of which a less scrupulous, or if that may sound uncharitable, of which a less cynical organization than the Catholic Church would have taken advantage. He would have been considered ripe for an emotional conversion, and would have been offered the blood of the Lamb in which to bathe with as much hospitable assurance as if the blood of the Lamb could be turned on like the tap of a hot bath. The impersonal aspect of this uncomprehended Mass which was being muttered by an unshaven priest on a chilly summer morning in Geneva, in that city which had inflicted more emotional plagues on the world than any other, gave to John nothing more than a sense of exclusion; but because thereby it created a spiritual and intellectual hunger which was to be associated in the future with the bodily hunger of these anxious days that impersonal Mass was marked indelibly upon his mind. The question John asked himself this morning would not be answered yet; but the question had been asked. A complete indifference to religion was never to be his again: God had troubled his curiosity. But being what in the jargon of the years to come was to be called an extrovert John did not search within himself to gratify that curiosity.

When the congregation had dispersed, save for two or three old women kneeling upon the stones in pious colloquy with statue or picture, John sat on in the church. What on earth was he going to do? For the first time he realized the stupidity of walking out of the hotel like that in an access of self-consciousness. If he went back to it now, battered by these two nights in the open air, the head-porter's suspicious eyes would glint more suspiciously than ever. Of course, if a letter had arrived for

him it would not matter. The porter could look as suspicious as he liked. Who would care, with twenty pounds in his pocket again?

The stillness and comparative warmth of the church soothed John's worries. He fell asleep. It was nearly noon when he woke. He looked at his silver wrist-watch. Would anybody in this city of watchmakers lend him enough on the security of the watch to send another telegram to his father? Probably nobody. The watch had cost only twenty-five shillings when new.

"Quelle heure est-il, monsieur, s'il vous plaît?"

John turned round with a start to see a peaked little woman on the line of seats behind him.

"Onze heures cinquante."

"Halloo! Why, you're English. Fancy me asking for the time in French! Well, I do call that laughable."

The Cockney voice was as refreshing as water. John grinned.

"I say, you haven't half been snoozing for the last half-hour," the little woman chirped on. "Muttering to yourself too, you was, once or twice. I was in two minds whether I wouldn't give you a poke in the back with my umberella. You know. I thought you might have been having a nasty dream or something. I remember I dreamt once a gentleman friend of mine whose teeth was always a bit too much in the middle of the front door started growing tusks and sprung at me as savage as a rhinoceros. Scream? Yes, I did scream. Well, the landlady thought it was Jack the Ripper come back. And what do you think the old cow did? Why, got inside of her own wardrobe. Oh, yes, I might have been murdered twice over before *she* was going to do anything about it.

Still and all, that dream was a warning, because this gentleman friend of mine pinched three pounds twelve and six out of my make-up box, and which was what I'd put by for my poor old mother. What a rotter, eh? Well, they say it takes all sorts to make up this world, and I reckon they're right."

John, thinking this flow of reminiscence was not the most suitable kind of conversation for the inside of a church, suggested to his neighbour that they should go outside and talk.

"All right. Only I want to light a few candles for St Anthony first. Fancy, I left my bag in a shop the day before yesterday, and I couldn't think where I *had* left it. I thought one of the girls in the pension had pinched it. I was nearly potty. Well, I mean to say, look what was in it. All I've got in the world you might say. It wasn't so much the money, though there was over a hundred francs; but there was all the words of my songs, and two bits that was written about me in the newspaper once, and my poor old mother's wedding-ring, and her rosary, and a bottle of scent which a fellow gave me in Lyons for the way I danced the cakewalk last winter and which I said I wouldn't open not till I was back in dear old England, and so this bottle of scent became a kind of something kept for luck and I wouldn't have lost it not for anything. Well, when I couldn't find my bag I was nearly barmy. Talk about the rats—well, I had the rats all that night, and that's a fact. And all yesterday I was looking for this bag of mine and praying to St Anthony, and I didn't like to borrow the money to light some candles for him then because . . . well, I don't know, he mightn't have liked it. I mean to say he might have thought they weren't really

my candles at all in a manner of speaking. Well, I came in here yesterday afternoon about six and told him all my troubles and suddenly, biff! Well, if he'd have leant over and said, 'You left your bag when you went in to ask the price of that cock's-feather boa, you silly coughdrop,' I couldn't have had it from him straighter. So just half a tick, for me to light some candles for him and say an Our Father and three Hail Marys."

To John's relief the flow of chatter ceased for a moment while the peaked little woman, whose small scarlet hat and dark blue coat and skirt braided with scarlet gave her a semi-military look like a *vivandière* in a comic opera, hurried away to express her gratitude to that mighty young Franciscan who had been dead nearly seven hundred years. Again, as John saw the little woman kneeling in the dimness beyond at the feet of the benign figure, he was stabbed by truth. He was as much awed by the serenity and intensity of those twelve flames lighted by that little woman as a child by the illumination of a Christmas tree.

"Here, you didn't get any holy water," said the little woman, as they came out of the church into the rain.

"I'm not a Roman Catholic."

"Fancy, and yet you went in there. Oh well, I expect you think it's a comical business. I had a girl friend like you who I took with me to Mass once. And what a set out it was! She got the giggles. And if she didn't properly show me up. I had to take her out by the arm. I think it was the crossing at the Gospel tore it. 'Oo-er,' she said, just like that. And then she came over purple in the face and I got her outside as soon as the Creed started. We had quite an argument about it on the way

back to the digs. It was when I was in panto in Liverpool. 'Well,' I said, 'that's the last time, Florrie,' I said, 'I'll let you make a poppy-show out of me like you did this morning,' I said. But she was a very young girl anyway. Florrie Cremer was her name. She was mashed on the fellow who played the drum at the Princess's. And I said 'Yes, you watch out, my girl,' I said, 'or he'll start in playing the drum on you.' So he did too, the dirty rotter, and him a married man. And somebody told Florrie if she took a G nib and dipped it in peroxide she could unload her packet of trouble. So she had a try and gave herself peritunitis and died before they could get her to hospital. What advice to give a poor girl, eh? Florrie Cremer. She was a pretty girl with dimples. My name's Cissie Oliver. What's yours? John Ogilvie? I suppose they call you 'Jack.' No? John, do they? Sounds a bit solemn to my taste. Let's split the diff, and make it 'Johnnie' between we two. And Ogilvie, eh? The only time I ever saw that name was in Birmingham. There was a hairdresser called Ogilvie where we bought our grease-paint. That was when I was in panto at the old Grand three years running. Oliver and Ogilvie. Sounds like a double trapeze act. But, fancy, you don't often get two O's except in old Ireland, do you? I'll bet that means something if anyone only knew what it was. Change the name and not the letter, change for the worse and not the better. So you needn't be afraid of me trying to marry you." Miss Oliver laughed shrilly, and then turned round to look up at her companion's face to see how he was enjoying her humour. "I say, you don't half look pale, Johnnie. What's the matter with you? I'll lay you was out on the tiles last night. Naughty boy. No,

without a joke, you ought to be careful with the girls in a goody-goody hole like Geneva. That's just the place you'll get the kind of applause nobody wants. Excuse my French."

John's seventeen-year-old pride could not hold out. He confided in Miss Oliver the tale of his misfortunes, she listening the while without interruption and looking like an extremely sympathetic rat, with her thin nose too big for her peaked face, her bright restless dark eyes, and her sharply retreating chin.

Only when the recital was finished did Miss Oliver become voluble again.

"Lost twenty spondulicks at those *petits chevaux*? And I'll lay you're not hardly nineteen yet?"

John smiled wanly. Grubby, stiff, hungry, cold, damp and penniless as he was, to be mistaken for over a year more than his actual age could still give him pleasure.

"It's nothing to laugh about," Miss Oliver continued. "I'd have called you a juggins if you'd have spent twenty soverings on a girl; but you *could* have gone to bye-bye with her unless she was a more unnatural bitch than what I've met yet. And I've met some. But twenty pounds on horses! And them toy ones! Why, they've shut people up for life in Bedlam for acting less silly than that. And what did you want to leave your hotel for? Because the porter looked at you! If I'd have walked out of every digs and pension where the old tear that owned them looked at me, I'd have been walking on my — for years, and even what little behind I have got wouldn't be there by now. You want to look back when anybody looks at you, Johnnie. Here, I'll tell you what, we'll go round and talk to this porter of yours. If I can't make the — blush in

English, French, and German I'm no longer Cissie Oliver."

"But suppose there's still no letter from my father?"

"Then you must send him another telegram, silly boy."

"But I haven't got a sou."

"But I found my bag, didn't I?"

"Yes, but . . ."

"And didn't you hear me tell you there was a hundred francs in it?"

"Yes, but . . ."

"Oh, for the love of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph stop saying 'but', if you don't want to give me the willies. Haven't I left twelve candles burning in front of St Anthony? What do you think I'd feel like next time I went to ask his help if I let myself be butted out of giving a helping hand myself? Bread and butter's what you want, Johnnie-Head-in-the-Air, not bread and buts. Next thing is you'll be too proud to come into this café and let me do the ordering because my French is better than yours. Are you too proud, eh?"

"No, I'm not," said John. "I'm dashed grateful."

She saw that his mouth was twitching and hurried in to the café ahead of him, to find a table in a corner.

When the meal was over, Cissie Oliver passed a golden coin to John under the table.

"You pay," she urged. "You can pay me back when you get your money. Don't overtip the waiter. Forty centimes is quite enough. They don't think any more of you in this country for pitching money about for nothing. That's the mistake English people always make when they go abroad. It's conceit, really. Give the poor bloody foreigner something to teach him to reckonize his betters."

"You know the Continent very well," John observed.

"Know the Continent well? I ought to. I started being sick into the Channel over twelve years ago. I'm thirty-two now. I've sung and danced in café concerts all over France. I've travelled with a circus in France and Spain. I've been through Germany and Austria with a dancing troupe. I even got to Constantinople once. What a dog's island! Talk about Abanazar the Wicked Uncle. The fellow who ran the café concert in Constantinople was a regular Abanazar all right, with a hat on his head like a kid's pail and a moustache like a horseshoe. What d'ye think I found when I went up to my room in the pension the first night? Why him! And in my bed. Took me for granted, you might say. I just looked at him for a minute, and then I threw the toilet-jug at him. 'You can sleep with that,' I said, 'you'll find it warmer than what I am'. And with that I left him and went to sleep with a Russian girl called Sonia. Oh, of course I had the sack, but an English fellow lent me the money to get to Vienna, and so it all came out in the wash. Oh, I've had a lot of adventures. The only thing is I worry a bit sometimes about what's going to happen one day. I sometimes think I'd be wise to stay in England. And yet except for panto where's a girl like me going to get a shop? It isn't as if I had a home. My old mother was the last. When she went I was all alone. I've often thought I'd like to save money enough to take a little shop in a country town. Sweets and what not. Tobacco too, and perhaps papers. That way one would always have somebody to talk to, and I must talk. But come on, we'd better go and see about this letter of yours. I suppose you never tried any of the

other hotels. Your dad might have made a mistake in the address."

And this was exactly what Alexander Ogilvie had done. It was necessary, however, to go to the Hotel X—— for evidence that John was the person he claimed to be.

The manager was inclined to be disobliging at first, but John's new friend was too much for him.

"You call yourself the manager of a hotel, yes," she pointed out to him. "But how you got a job outside of the lift would take some guessing, for you haven't got the brains to do more than press a button and leave the rest to the lift. Fancy not thinking to enquire at another hotel. I suppose you think this is the only hotel in Geneva. Well, I grant you Geneva's a one-horse hole of a town, but it's not quite bad enough for yours to be the only hotel in it. Now, don't start waving your hands at me, but put your hat on that foxy head of yours and come round and explain to the manager of the Hotel Y—— about this letter. That is if you want your bill paid. If you don't, kindly have this monsieur's luggage brought down and we'll leave without paying."

"Très bien, madame. Je vous accompagnerai."

The letter from John's father was not exhilarating. True, it enclosed some money, but little more than enough to pay John's hotel bill and his second-class fare back to London.

"Your letter from Geneva came as a great shock," the barrister had written. "Worried as I was by the illness of Elise, though I'm thankful to say the operation was successful and she is on a fair road to recovery, I should have been spared the worry of your behaviour. Even if the money was lost entirely in gambling, you have shown me that you are quite

unfit to be trusted abroad on your own. We had better give up the notion of your staying with a family in France or Switzerland. I can hardly send you back to school next term, though I suppose that is what I should do. I must make enquiries about some private tutor somewhere in the country where you can spend the next year out of mischief. The postponement of my marriage owing to this unfortunate illness of Elise means that I shall be at home for the present. You can return at once."

"I suppose I ought to go back to-night," said John gloomily. Now that he had some money Geneva was becoming attractive again.

"Oh, not to-night," Cissie Oliver protested. "I wanted you to hear my show to-night. When was the letter from your dad sent off? more than a week ago? Well, one day won't make any odds. You can show him his mistake on the envelope. He can't say anything."

For two or three minutes, while the wine he and his guest had drank at dinner was still potent and when she had gone off to prepare herself for the evening's entertainment at the Café Concert Etoile, John debated with himself the possibility of a return visit to the Kursaal in an attempt to win back what he had lost on that first fatal visit, and perhaps even win more besides. Suppose he should begin by playing with single francs, determined to come away as soon as he had lost twenty—the maximum he could afford? There would be no risk in that. Suppose this were his lucky night? He might not lose a franc. He would soon know. It was an established fact that you should always play up your luck. But would he have the strength of mind to play no more if he lost the first twenty francs? He should have given Cissie (a pity such a good sort should be called Cissie) the balance of his money.

Then he would have *had* to stop at twenty francs if he had gone back to the Kursaal . . . if . . . if . . . if he won forty pounds he could make a present of half to Cissie. She had said how much she wanted to see the Paris Exhibition. He could go back to England through France, and they could visit the Exhibition together. Then the recollection of those two nights in the open intervened. He would not run the risk of repetition. For many years to come John was to blame the cautious decision he took that summer evening in 1900 for every surrender he made thereafter to prudence and common sense, those two withered virgins of the moral code.

The Etoile was a somewhat dingy little café close to one of the quays of the Rhône. It was frequented for the most part by *petits bourgeois*, small shopkeepers and their wives, bank clerks and their sweethearts, and an occasional foreigner desperately trying to find a little gaiety in Geneva. Here and there on the walls hung a printed placard begging frequenters to renew their *consommations* once an hour. The proprietor had grown tired of providing an evening's amusement for parsimonious clients at the price of a cup of coffee or a small bock. At the far end of the room beyond the closely packed marble-topped tables at which the clients sat was a small platform which served as stage. On the right of this was a rickety Erard piano, at which in a decayed evening-dress sat the accompanist, a pallid thin tuberculous-looking young man who was never without a Caporal cigarette between his lips except when he drank the health of some visitor who had stood him a bock. Behind the piano a stained and faded cretonne curtain veiled the performers from the eyes of

the audience when they wanted to change their clothes or their make-up.

The array of artistic talent was not brilliant; but the worst of French performers of this kind are better than the best of British. The favourite was a tall and buxom blonde in a very low black *décolleté* who, Cissie Oliver informed John, had two years ago been a chambermaid in a St Malo hotel. She was not much over twenty, and with a little luck in catching the eye of the right man, Odette might reach Paris in time.

"Well, she has life," declared Cissie, who in a Spanish costume down to the knees was seated with John at the table nearest to the pianist. "Look at her now, I mean."

Odette was singing a song, the refrain of which was:

*"Assez de bicyclette, de bicyclette, de bicyclette!
Moi, je préfère la brouette, la brouette, la brouette,
On pousse de temps en temps,
C'est un mouvement épantant."*

The singer's proclamation that she preferred a wheelbarrow to a bicycle was received with that frank Gallic mirth which at this date was forbidden to merry England.

"Of course, if you understood French really well, you'd understand what they're laughing at," Cissie observed. "You see . . . oh, well, I don't think I'll explain the joke . . . it would just sound nasty in English."

"Viens ici, Odette," she called presently to the singer, who had sprung down from the stage to loud applause. The tall blonde came and sat down genially at their table.

"Je te présente monsieur John Ogilvie. Il est anglais."

"Ça se voit," said Odette. "Pourtant il est gentil, n'est-

ce pas? Enchantée, monsieur." The big blonde extended her black-gloved hand.

"Je ne suis pas anglais," said John a little stiffly. "Je suis écossais."

He had learnt that in France at any rate there was still a difference, and in these days of the Boer War when the Fashoda incident was not forgotten the difference counted for much.

"Are you really Scotch?" exclaimed Cissie. "Well, I can't say I ever liked a Scotchman before I met you."

"Mince alors! Ne parlez pas anglais, ou je file," Odette cried.

"Pardon, chérie," the English girl said. Then she leant over to John and whispered to him to offer Odette a *flûte*.

"A what?" John gasped in alarm.

"A glass of champagne. It'll only cost you a franc."

John reddened. He thought that Cissie was adapting the situation to his national character.

"Garçon," he called grandly, "apportez trois verres de champagne."

"Trois flûtes, Philippe," Cissie supplemented.

The tall thin glasses of very sweet champagne arrived, and the three pledged one another.

"Dis donc, Ceecee," Odette demanded, "le petit est ton caprice, hein?"

"Non, non, blagueuse, il est trop jeune."

"Il n'est pas du tout trop jeune. Je pourrais coucher avec lui . . . tu sais, Ceecee, quand on est jeune comme ça on fait l'amour. . . ." She kissed the tips of her fingers for a superlative.

"Ferme-la," Cissie scolded.

John was by now blushing deeply, to Odette's delight.

"Regarde, regarde," she cried in an ecstasy, "il rougit. Non, sans blague, Ceecee, s'il ne te fait pas peine je voudrais bien qu'il couche avec moi cette nuit."

The English girl frowned disapproval at Odette; but at this moment she was called upon to sing her first song, which proved to be 'Just a little bit of string', given in a small breathless voice and with a queer mechanical coyness. The song was followed by a dance, which was not without a certain grace.

"Elle est gentille, la petite Ceecee," Odette decided. "Mais je ne trouve pas, moi, qu'elle chante bien. Qu'est-ce-que veut dire, 'Jost a leetle beet of strring'?"

John's forehead was puckered in an attempt to translate.

"Seulement un petit morceau de corde."

"Comment?" Odette exclaimed in blank astonishment. Then suddenly her expression melted into mirthful comprehension. "Ah, je comprehends. C'est sale, hein?" Delighted with having as she supposed discovered the bawdy allusion, she dashed across to the pianist and explained the point of Cissie's song to him.

"Pas vrai!" the pianist exclaimed with a laugh.

"Oui, je te jure, Le p'tit copain de Ceecee m'a fait comprendre à merveille. Oh, shockink! Oh, shockink!"

The *grivois*, an elderly man with the conventional clown's make-up of the French comic singer, was the next to be informed of the hidden meaning of 'Just a little bit of string', and within a few minutes everybody in the café was shouting 'Jost a leetle beet of strring, Meess.'

The English performer came down from the stage in some bewilderment to be greeted by Odette with her interpretation.

"You told her it meant that?" she said to John.

"I don't know what on earth they're all talking about," replied John in bewilderment. "She asked me to translate 'Just a little bit of string', and I suppose I made some mistake in the French."

"That's all right. It's the dirty minds these French people have. But, look here, don't you let Odette lead you astray. She's a nice girl, but she's not the kind of girl for you."

Odette was by now on the stage again singing:

*"Puisqu' entre nous tout est fini,
Disons adieu, mon gros bêté.
Nous avons bien aimé,
L'un l'autre, toi et moi,
Donne-moi tes beaux yeux
Que je les baise . . ." etc., etc.*

The English are conservative in politics and food; the French are conservative in everything except politics and food, and in nothing more conservative than in light entertainment. Songs like that sung by Odette this summer evening in 1900 would be heard over the wireless every evening thirty-five years later. Another thirty-five years hence a poet may celebrate some *chanteuse* as Keats the nightingale for her changeless song. John at his age lacked the experience to determine why the banal words of Odette's lays should affect him with a sense of permanent and profound emotion, whereas when a few minutes later Cissie Oliver was singing:

*"What is the use of loving a girl
If the girl don't love you?
What is the use of loving a girl
When you know she don't want you to?

What if she's fair beyond all compare,
And what if her eyes are blue?
What is the use of loving a girl
If the girl don't want you to?"*

the equally banal words should affect him with a sense of tawdry and superficial emotion which when the novelty of its expression was trite would be merely funny. Moreover, the warmth of the French girl's singing, just as conventional of course as the kittenish manner of the English girl, had such ease of technique that art concealed itself and John's pulses began to race in response to the directness of the passionate appeal she seemed to be making to him.

"Dis, chéri, tu veux faire l'amour avec moi?" Odette's husky whisper fluttered in his ear when she came to sit beside him during Cissie Oliver's turn. And then with that frankness of physical relish which of Western women only a Frenchwoman dares to use in speaking of love without dread of disgusting the more fastidious male, Odette murmured her invitation to enchantment like Circe and Calypso once upon a time. Beyond and above her low melodious husky voice, sounded thinly:

*"What is the use of loving a girl
If the girl don't want you to?"*

"Listen, you silly boy, if you let Odette take you home with her I'll really be angry. Not that she isn't a good sort. It isn't for any harm you'd come to. But I properly sized you up this morning, and you don't know where to stop. That's your trouble. You've got to go back home, or your Par'll get nasty. I could tell that by the letter he wrote you. You don't want to be stuck again like you was over *petits chevaux*. Go on now, Johnnie, and be a sensible boy, or else you'll make me sorry I didn't push you off by the night train."

John smiled at her. The condition of destitute misery

in which he had made her acquaintance in the church that morning was already growing so remote that the notion of being pushed off by this little woman so much more like a nursery governess than an actress set up a comic picture in his mind. She mistook the cause of his smile.

"Oh, you needn't think I'm jealous. It never entered my head you might take a fancy to *me* in that way. Well, any decent English girl wouldn't. Only you can't expect a French girl to look at it the same way as us. Well, they're brought up different for one thing. But, Johnnie, I do beg you to go home quietly and not let me think I've led you astray."

John in spite of the growing remoteness of his misfortunes did feel grateful to Cissie Oliver—but oh, why was she called Cissie?—and he would have liked to show his gratitude by behaving with the decorum and prudence she demanded; but Odette was now slowly pacing the stage to a lilting air in the words of which play was made with various flowers:

*"Le lys chez les réactionnaires,
Le . . . something not caught . . . chez les généraux,
Les œillets chez les corsetières. . . ."*

and as the tall blonde every time she turned threw back at him over her shoulder a glance which was the most intoxicating mixture of challenge, mischief, schoolgirl humour, gaminerie, espièglerie, and downright unashamed sensuality, John determined, whatever the cost, to accept the invitation should it prove to be serious and not a piece of devilment at his expense.

If anything had been needed to spur his determination,

it had been supplied by the attempt of one of Odette's admirers to secure her favours for this very night. As she sprang down from the stage a clean-shaven raffish young man, who had entered the café during her last song and, after greeting the proprietor, made his way across to the corner where the performers sat, caught Odette by the wrist and spoke to her.

"That's her fancy boy," Cissie told John. "He's been away for a week. I reckon she'll have to take him back with her to-night," she added with relief.

But apparently Odette was not of that opinion. She had shaken off the man's grasp, and for answer to his angry protest was now laughing with that maddening insolence which Odettes can always command. John could not make out what she said in answer to her lover's second protest; but presently she swept him aside contemptuously and came back to the table at which she had been sitting with John and Cissie Oliver. The consumptive pianist dropped his chin in a droll grimace, and with a malicious eye watched over the top of his instrument the discomfited suitor standing in evident perplexity at the attitude of a young woman by whom he had expected to be gratefully welcomed. Then the pianist turned to Odette, eyebrows raised in a question.

"Il m'agace, mon cher, il m'emmerde," Odette called over to him, loudly enough for the suitor to overhear.

Cissie whispered across the table that how stupid it was of her to be so rude to a man who might pay her out the first time she gave him an opportunity.

"Je m'en fous," Odette scoffed, and having thus tersely disposed of the suitor she shouted to the waiter to bring a round of flûtes with a bock for the pianist; but when John

was going to pay she shook her head and signed to the waiter that the drinks were on her. The suitor departed, bile in his parting glance.

Cissie Oliver sighed. She had never before seen Odette stand drinks like this. It would be idle to fight against the situation which she herself had brought about. It was wrong, no doubt, for a boy of Johnnie's age and in Johnnie's position to be having an affair with a girl like Odette. Still, Odette was mashed on him. She had made it clear to her that Johnnie had very little money. If only the kid didn't go and get potty on Odette. She was a good-looking girl. No mistake about that. Just the girl who would excite a kid like Johnnie. And she had a jolly fine figure too. No mistake about that. You couldn't blame a kid for getting a bit excited when a girl like Odette made it so obvious that he'd properly caught her eye. No use in getting annoyed about it. Odette would only think she was jealous. And that might make her nasty.

"Well, I suppose you two love-birds want to go to your nest," she said when the concert was over and the café was nearly empty.

"Qu'est-ce que c'est que ça? Lovebairds?" Odette asked.

The little English woman explained.

"Vraiment elle est gentille, la p'tite Ceecee," Odette declared, with an affectionate smile. "Alors, tu viens, Jean?"

"Let's meet for déjeuner to-morrow," John suggested to Cissie. "Come round to my hotel at one o'clock, will you?"

Odette frowned.

"À une heure? Ah, mais oui, j'ai bien compris." She whispered something to the Englishwoman.

"You are the limit, Odette!"

"Hein?"

"Tu es terrible. She says if I meet you at five o'clock that will be time enough," Cissie explained to John.

"Yes, but I shall be wanting lunch by one o'clock," John insisted a little indignantly.

"You'd better make it five o'clock to meet me," Cissie advised. "Then you won't be worrying if you keep me waiting."

Once more she whispered something to Odette.

"Parole d'honneur! Je ne suis pas rosse."

The little Englishwoman, so like an anxious nursery governess, was reassured. Odette would keep her promise. She would not take a sou from Johnnie.

The weather was clear and quiet and warm again when at two o'clock Odette and John left the café to walk slowly along the silent streets to the house where she was living.

"Bras dessus bras dessous," she whispered.

And when he took her left arm she pulled his hand higher until it was pressed against her breast.

"J'ai des beaux nichons, oui?" she asked.

He stopped to answer her with a kiss. A decrescent moon lately risen was hanging over the chimney-tops. A dim human shape withdrew into the shadow of an alley just ahead. Her tongue swift as a honey-seeking moth pierced his lips for an instant. John shivered. When they drew apart the moon seemed to be falling down on them, and his hand clutched at hers to steady himself against the fancy that he was reeling too. A little laugh of contentment trilled in her lovely throat. She triumphed like a

naiad who has lured a mortal youth to the deeps of her own blue world.

"Vache!"

It was Odette's contemptuously dismissed lover who spat out the savage monosyllable. He had stepped forward into the moonlight before them.

"Ta gueule, sale maquereau!" she spat back.

The despised one raised an arm to strike her. John, thinking in the very moment of flinging himself forward to tackle his rival low how extraordinary a thing it was that a few weeks ago he should still have been at school, brought the despised one down with an exhilarating crash to hit his head against the kerbstone and lie motionless in the gutter.

"Ai-je le tué, I mean l'ai-je tué, I mean est-ce que je l'ai tué?" John enquired, his anxiety about the correctness of his French mitigating his anxiety about the fate of Odette's former lover.

"Tant mieux s'il est crevé, le roule-en-cul!"

She knelt down to examine the damage, and John bending over beside her was sharply aware of the lemon-scented brilliantine on the hair of the unconscious man mingled with the faded perfume of chypre and perspiration from Odette's dress.

"Il n'y a pas même du sang," she announced scornfully.
"Allons-y, ma poupee."

"Mais nous devons trouver de l'eau," John urged.
"Il a besoin d'un peu d'eau, je crois."

"Vraiment? Alors fais ton besoin. Comme ça il en aura assez. Mais non, sans boniments, filons. Je ne veux pas qu'un tel salaud gâte notre belle nuit d'amour."

John was satisfied that the despised one was not more

than temporarily knocked out. There was no mark of a blow. If one of the police should find him like this he would be supposed to have fallen of his own accord.

The house in which Odette lived stood in a narrow street hard by one of the riverside quays, and her room was at the very top of it, an attic in the roof. Half-way up the narrow stairs John had been seized with a panic that, when he found himself in the intimacy of Odette's room, by the gaucherie of his amorous behaviour he would give away so clumsily the fact of its being the first time he had ever been to bed with a woman that in disgust at such a booby she would bid him clear off. When he saw the bed it seemed as empty and vast and awesome as the football-field on which he was to play his first match for the Classical Fifteen against the Moderns at St James's School.

Odette had flung off her cloak and was holding him close in another wild embrace.

"Comme elle me plait, ta bouche! On dirait un bouton de rose. Je deviens tout à fait jeune fille quand tu me tiens dans tes bras. Raconte-moi ton premier petit roman. Était-elle blonde ou brune? Grande? Petite? Dis-moi, dis, mon ange. Je ne serai pas méchante. Pourtant j'aurais voulu bien te donner le premier leçon d'amour."

"Je n'ai jamais . . ." how on earth did one say . . . "je n'ai jamais couché. . . ." John stumbled on, blushing hotly for his ignorance even of the very speech of love in French. He could have expressed himself more fluently in Latin.

"Pas vrai!" Odette exclaimed joyfully. "Pas vrai que tu n'as jamais couché avec une femme?"

"Oui, c'est vrai. Je vous assure . . . I mean . . . je t'assure."

"Comme je suis veinarde, moi!" Odette cried in ecstasy. "C'est assommant, tu sais; moi, j'ai fait l'amour tant de fois depuis que j'ai eu treize ans, mais jamais, jamais je n'ai fait l'amour avec quelqu'un comme toi. Oh, comme je suis contente, comme je suis heureuse. Je te jure que tu te souviendras de tes premières noces pendant la reste de ta vie. Alors, je suis ta gouvernante cette nuit, je suis ta miss?"

John thought that Odette looked very much more like a goddess than a governess, like Juno indeed in Tintoretto's Origin of the Milky Way. He wondered if it would be good manners to turn down the lamp which was on his side. Ovid's four books of the *Ars Amatoria* provided no answer to this problem. Odette divined his perplexity, and shook her head so that her fair tresses flowed down over her snowy shoulders to hide her snowy breasts.

"Je ne veux pas perdre tes beaux yeux bleus. Mais prenez-vous garde aux yeux bleus," she added on a lilt from one of her songs.

Then she turned and caught him to her.

Odette fell asleep before John did. He lay for a long while watching the circle of lamplight on the ceiling. It was like a new planet sailing into his ken, an influential planet too. To this white form sleeping so quietly beside him he had been an agreeable but utterly casual incident. To him that white form was in the significance of the revelation it had accorded to him not less important than the dazzling nakedness of Aphrodite herself. He sat up to contemplate womanhood. She was sleeping with her right cheek pillow'd upon her right hand, on the palm of which rested the fingers of the other hand reversed like a dancer making the conventional gesture of slumber. The

curve from shoulder to hip, graceful even beneath the huddle of bedclothes, tempted him to fling them back and expose all that beauty, not for sensuous delight but in that spirit of worship which perceived the dryad within the tree, the oread behind the wreath of upland mist. What a comparison he could have made for old Askew between the treatment of love by the modern poets and the old Romans if he had had this experience of Odette before he wrote his essay! Epithets he had translated into dusty dictionary English when construing in class now flowed freely and untranslatable. Who was it that had called one of his loves 'fulgida'? That was Odette. She was 'fulgida'. And when John had put out the lamp the word blazed through the darkness.

He woke with the rising of the sun. Odette was still asleep, her attitude unchanged. He lay, watching the blind of the dormer window belly and flap in the summer breeze and listening to the isolated sounds of morning in the street below.

"I ought to be feeling frightfully tired," he reflected. "Two nights in the open and only three hours' sleep last night. Yet I feel perfectly fresh."

He turned round to look at Odette. She opened her eyes. They were bright hazel by this light, with more green in them than brown. He had supposed them blue last night. What an odd lack of observation!

"Dodo, dodo, ma poupee," she murmured drowsily. "Je suis fatiguee? Quelle heure est-il?"

"Sept heures."

"Ah, par exemple," she protested, and snuggled deeper into the bedclothes to escape from such a cruel hour.

John lay awake for a long time, meditating on the

pattern of his life during these last four months which had been so much more eventful than all the years before them: but when he tried to carry that pattern forward into the future he became confused by the intricacy it began to assume, and in confusion he fell asleep again.

It was noon when he woke for the second time. Odette was sitting up, stretching herself like an overgrown school-girl and shouting to somebody outside the door for coffee. John felt embarrassed at the prospect of a third person's entering the room. He managed to lodge an objection in halting French; but the only effect of it was that when the serving-girl did arrive with the coffee she was informed of his embarrassment as a good joke.

After coffee Odette bade John leave her. He was hurt by her readiness to be rid of him. The classic attitude he had discerned in himself last night had already been ousted by the sentiment of to-day. He tried to win from her an expression of regret, an admission of emotion. Was she not in the least sorry to part with him?

Yes, she was sorry, but of what use was it to be sorry? He was in no position to keep her as a mistress. Therefore it was more sage to part now than later. He had pleased her greatly. It had been a delicious experience. She should not forget her *petit anglais* at once.

Ah, she would remember him?

Of course she would.

For how long?

Odette shrugged her shoulders. That depended.

On other people?

She shrugged her shoulders again, a little impatiently this time.

John dressed in silence, and when he was ready to go

stood puzzled. He was sure that he ought to make her a present; but how much ought that present to be? Certainly he could leave her without making a present and send her something by Cissie after consultation with her. But what if Odette should suppose that he was trying to avoid his obligations?

"Viens ici," Odette called to him from where she was lying on her back in bed, and regarding him with those prominent bright big hazel eyes, brighter for the tarnished gold of her prodigal hair. "Écoute, mon petit," she said solemnly, "tu penses à ce que tu dois me régaler pour notre belle nuit d'amour, n'est-ce pas? Non, non," she interrupted when he would have explained his problem. "J'ai bien compris. Or, je ne veux pas absolument que tu me donnes de l'argent. Embrasse-moi. Ne fais pas des moues comme un petit enfant. Embrasse-moi."

Her hazel eyes began to twinkle, and in her husky voice, huskier still in the morning air, she sang softly:

"Puisqu' entre nous tout est fini,
Disons adieu, mon gros bébé.

Pourtant depuis que tu as couché avec Odette tu n'es plus bébé."

She gathered him to her and held him close in a long kiss. 'Elle est fraîche, fraîche,' she murmured to herself.

"Quoi?"

"Ta bouche, ma poupée d'amour. Ah, oui, il est frais, ton beau bec. Mais j'en ai eu assez. Adieu, adieu! Je dormirai encore. Laissez-moi," and with that abrupt plural of the second person she dissolved their brief intimacy.

When John entered his hotel, he had an impression that the head-porter had shrunk since yesterday.

"If a Miss Oliver enquires for me," he said coldly, "I am in."

"Sairtainly, sair."

His acknowledgment was obsequious.

"And I am leaving to-night for Paris," John added, with a haughtiness that still further abased the porter.

'For Paris?' John asked himself as he stepped into the lift.

The notion of visiting the Exhibition had occurred to him when he was playing with the fancy of getting back his losses and more beside at *petits chevaux*; but he was not aware of having definitely made up his mind to visit the Exhibition until he had informed the porter of his destination. Up in the bedroom, he counted over his money. It would certainly be cutting things fine, but if necessary he could telegraph again to his father from Paris. John was filled by a rich confidence in his own ability to confront any situation. The last twenty-four hours had been twenty-four months! He now descended to the dining-saloon and, although it was sometime past two o'clock, demanded *déjeuner*. He discovered as he had expected that the head-waiter had shrunk like the porter.

John had already found out about his train and finished his packing at five o'clock when Cissie Oliver called at the hotel.

"You *are* back then, you bad boy."

She was still wearing the dark-blue coat and skirt piped and braided with scarlet, and the English spinsters in the lounge eyed her with suspicion across their cups of deplorable continental tea.

"As a matter of fact, I got back before two."

"Fancy, what an early bird! Well, and now I suppose you'll be wanting to pack me off so as to get back to Odette before she goes down to the Café?"

The little woman spoke lightly, but John detected an anxious note underneath.

"No, I'm going to Paris to-night. Then I'll spend to-morrow looking at the Exhibition and cross by Havre to-morrow night."

"Oh, Johnnie, I am glad," she exclaimed impulsively, putting out a shabbily gloved hand to touch his forearm. He felt strangely moved by the sight of that frayed glove of grey suède. The whole of Cissie's struggle with life was expressed by it.

"Come and sit over there in the corner, and we'll have tea."

They withdrew from the propinquity of the English spinsters to a couple of wicker chairs set beneath a dusty palm.

"So you didn't fall so madly in love with Odette?"

"She was awfully decent."

"Well, she's a good sort. If I hadn't known that, I'd have had something more to say before you went back with her last night. The only thing which really worried me was that boy of hers coming back like that. I was afraid there'd be a proper row."

"There nearly was; but I knocked him out, luckily."

"You didn't have a fight? Oh, Johnnie, aren't you the limit?"

John related the brief details of the despised one's attempt to interrupt the night's idyll.

"Well, all I can say is you *were* lucky. He might have

knifed you. He's nothing better than a proper Apache. I hope he won't try any of his dirty tricks on Odette to-night."

"Do you think . . . ?"

"Oh, what's the good of you staying on the off-chance of a row?" Cissie interrupted quickly. "Besides, her other boy will probably be back to-night."

"Oh, then she has another boy?"

"Another boy? She's got dozens. Well, I mean to say, she's a very attractive girl. But you took her eye properly, and no mistake. I've never seen her so mashed on anyone all of a sudden like that. I really felt quite awkward. Still, live and learn, they say. And if you wanted a night out I knew Odette could be trusted."

"She wouldn't accept a present."

"Well, of course not. She wouldn't want to be paid for what she was doing for love."

"I'd hardly have called it love," said John, who was still feeling that Odette might have encouraged his sentimental mood of this morning.

"Well, it was what they call a *béguin*. I tell you I never saw her hook anybody up the way she hooked you."

"She sent me off pretty coolly."

"Did she? I expect she was afraid of making a fool of herself. She couldn't afford to get soppy. She's different to what I am, Odette is. Of course, I've travelled with one or two as far as the bus goes. I'm not a virgin martyr. But I see pretty straight, even if I don't always walk straight. And men don't want from me what they want from Odette. If I started in being off-handed with men like what she is I'd miss the bus altogether. Nothing surer. I've had one or two good friends, because I've been

a good pal to them. And to tell the truth, most of my friends have been fellows who didn't get off too easily with more flash girls than what I am."

"You were a jolly good friend to me, Cissie."

"That's all right. You needn't start making excuses because you didn't ask me to take you home. I didn't expect you to. And that's the flat truth. Not for a moment, I didn't. For one thing, laugh if you like, but I wouldn't have thought it right."

"Were you shocked at my going home with Odette?"

"Of course I wasn't. That's another thing altogether. You didn't meet her in a church, and she's younger than me. Much younger. And she's pretty. Still, I'm glad you're going away from here. Once is all right, but you don't want to go falling madly in love with a girl like Odette at your age. You couldn't be more than a toy for her."

John flushed.

"Well, you couldn't, Johnnie. You couldn't really. Look at you now, colouring up like a girl yourself. In another ten years you may be able to do what you like with a girl like Odette, but by that time you'll be looking beyond Odettes. At least if you're not you won't be much credit to yourself. You'll be twenty-nine then."

Since she was so contemptuous of his rawness at the nineteen she supposed him John decided to tell her his actual age.

"Seventeen!" she gasped. "Oh, well, aren't you the limit? Seventeen! And gambling away all his money and sleeping with a café concert girl and off on his own now to Paris. No wonder your Pa was a bit annoyed. I won't half call Odette a baby-snatcher when I see her to-night."

Youth's vanity was gratified. John faced with equanimity the sahara of that nonage which still remained to him. By the time he was twenty-five he might hope to be mistaken for thirty-five.

On the way up through France, notwithstanding the fullness and food-scented airlessness of the second-class compartment, John slept. Cavernous stations echoing to the rattle of luggage-trucks impinged upon his consciousness at intervals during the night. At such moments he could see by the light of the veiled lamp in the roof his five fellow-passengers bloated by sleep in a huddle on the opposite seat, like packed-away puppets. Round about six he woke up completely. Fontainebleau's green forest rolled along the skyline glowing in the air of the morning beneath a watchet sky. The mouths of the sleeping travellers worked like a *solfatara*. An exhalation of stale breath filled the compartment. John let down the windows. The sleepers woke in horror at the fresh air. A fat man in a grey alpaca jacket opposite John pulled up the window, with that in his manner which suggested he had saved by his prompt action a ship's crew from drowning. It was a relief to see the first advertisement hoardings that marked the nearness of Paris. John put his luggage in the *consigne* at the Gare de Lyon, ate his breakfast in that restaurant which suggests that one is eating in the organ-loft of some cathedral, and rattled away in a fiacre to the nearest entrance of the Exhibition Universelle.

Here, after a period of aimless wandering round several of the pavilions of the various nations taking part, he discovered the moving platforms which at varying rates of speed continuously encircled the whole Exhibition. The behaviour of people on this novel form of entertain-

ment was much more entertaining than any display of the national resources of the exhibiting nations. It was of greater interest to observe the despairing antics of an elderly lady being left behind by her family because she had stepped back in affright on the fixed platform or to listen to the yells of a child being carried away from its nurse because the nurse had not summoned up the courage to step from the fixed platform to the moving one. It was pleasant to walk at four miles an hour in the same direction as the fastest platform was moving and thus seem to be flying round the Exhibition past the coloured tiles of the pavilions, past the tree-tops, past the people swarming below, and it was amusing to run in the opposite direction so that with all one's effort one remained stationary.

John had been enjoying himself like this for a couple of hours when he suddenly caught sight of Emil Stern sitting on a seat at one of the 'stations' and jumping across the platforms was presently beside him.

"Emil, what a rag finding you here!"

It appeared that the Sterns had come over to France as soon as school had broken up for Julius to see a Parisian doctor, and they were now going to spend the summer holidays at Fontainebleau so that Julius could see him every week. There was a chance after all that the edict of previous doctors would be revoked and that he would be able to play in public again next year. At this moment Emil's mother and brother were at the doctor's, and they were to meet him in about half an hour at the Dutch Pavilion just below the moving platform station where he had been sitting.

"And you'll be able to come back with us to Fontainebleau," Emil added.

John gave a brief account of his adventures. He did not feel sure that his father would agree to such a visit.

"Oh, but mother can write to your father and make it clear that you've not fallen into the hands of thieves or whores. As a matter of fact we were wishing we knew what your plans were, on the chance of your being able to join us. You never wrote."

"Well, you didn't want a picture postcard and I had no energy to write a long letter. But I've got just enough oof to get home with and . . ."

"We can lend you all the money you want," Emil interrupted. "But if your father is going to get married and set out on a wedding-tour I should think he'd be glad to have you off his hands."

"I don't know if his proposed wife will be well enough."

"What's it matter anyway? You must be *somewhere* in August."

"We'll see what your mater says."

"She'll say what I say. She often talks about you."

John was pleased to hear this; but in spite of his rapid advance toward a perfect maturity during the last month, he was still youthful enough to feel a fear of making an ass of himself by a too evident display of gratification, and he quickly asked Emil how he had done in the Exams.

"I was top both in Latin and Greek, and I won the Rouse Prize for Latin Verse and the Carrington Prize for Greek Iambics."

"You beat Combermere? Good lord, I should think that's the first time a fellow in the Lower Sixth had beaten the Captain of the School. You're a bloody little marvel, aren't you?" John added affectionately.

Mrs Stern left John in no doubt of her delight at that

chance meeting. She was convinced that a tactful telegram to his father followed by equally tactful letters from John and herself would secure the necessary permission for him to spend the next six weeks at Fontainebleau.

"Six weeks, Mrs Stern!" John expostulated. "Why, you'll be sick to death of me ages before that."

"No, dear John, we shan't be."

"I want to learn about butterflies," Julius announced abruptly.

John looked round startled. For a moment he supposed that the prodigy meant human butterflies, and to study himself as a representative of their habits.

"Julius heard you talking about butterflies once, John, and your knowledge made a profound impression on him," Mrs Stern explained.

"We ought to get some good fritillaries in Fontainebleau, and even purple-emperors, I should think. I saw an Apollo at Grindelwald. I was frightfully excited. It was the first time I had ever seen one on the wing."

"What's an Apollo like?" Julius asked. "Shall we see one at Fontainebleau?"

"No, it's an Alpine butterfly. It's white, with almost transparent wings spotted with bright red and bright blue."

John wished it were as easy for Julius to communicate to him his knowledge of music as for him to communicate to Julius his knowledge of butterflies.

"I don't like killing things," Emil put in. "I think collecting is the worst of human vanities."

"Oh well, I don't suppose I shall go on collecting butterflies," said John. "But I can tell Julius about them without collecting them."

"I shouldn't mind killing a lot of Frenchmen after the Dreyfus case," Julius observed.

"Julius, dear, let me implore you to be careful how you talk like that in public. And why have you suddenly taken up this bloodthirsty attitude?"

"I don't know. I think I'm beginning to feel well," the musical prodigy replied.

It was already dusk when they reached the crooked little white house in the forest which Mrs Stern had taken for the holidays. In the warmth and stillness of high summer it glimmered like a house in a fairy-tale. Leaning out of his bedroom window that night and drinking in the scent of the bracken, that scent at once so heady and so languorous, John composed in his head the tactful letter to his father which was to follow up the telegram already sent off.

Three days later Alexander Ogilvie alighted from a hansom at the door of the nursing-home where Elise Hunter was making a rapid recovery from her operation. It was a hot still afternoon, sabbath seeming in that quiet of the August holidays which was so much more evident in the London of a generation ago. The planes in the Marylebone square were fresh enough as yet, but the foliage of the lime-trees had already assumed that mat monotonous green which precedes a drab decline and fall. A passing whiff from a barrow of plums which a costermonger was wheeling alongside the pavement reminded the barrister that it was stale and dusty in London and that he and Elise should have been in the Dolomites by now.

The nurse, who had the look nurses sometimes have of being undressable like certain dolls, took the bunch of

picotees Alexander Ogilvie had brought with him to put them into a vase, and led the way to his fiancée's room where Lady Hunter, a majestic woman, who like the nurse looked permanently dressed, was sitting with her daughter.

"She is so much better to-day, Alec," Lady Hunter's contralto proclaimed, "that I think we shall get her down into the country within a very few days, and I was just saying that you should come down to Worcestershire with us and have a quiet marriage at the end of the month. Talk it over with Elise. I must go now. I told Baxter to come for me at half-past."

Her future son-in-law looked out of the window.

"The carriage is there now."

It would have amused John to observe the deference with which his father escorted Lady Hunter to her victoria.

Back in Elise's room Alexander Ogilvie showed her the two letters he had received by this morning's post from Fontainebleau:

Dear Father,

*I expect you have been wondering what had happened to me. By mistake you sent the money to a different hotel. So I waited about ten days in Geneva before I got it. Thanks very much for sending it. I arrived in Paris yesterday as I thought you would think it a good idea if I had a *squint* look at the Paris Exhibition which as a matter of fact was rather boring. I intended to come back via Havre which is cheaper, but I met a school friend at the Exhibition and his mother has asked me to stay with them at Fontainebleau till the middle of September. Of course I do not know your plans, but if*

this fits in with them I think it would be rather a good opportunity for me to work at French. I hope Elise is a jolly sight better by now. Please tell her how sorry I was about her illness and say how much I am looking forward to meeting her.

*Your affectionate son,
John.*

P.S. I had to spend a certain amount at the Exhibition getting a wedding-present for you and Elise. I would have bought you something in Geneva, but I thought you would be bored by a cuckoo-clock. So I got you six liqueur glasses at the Venetian glass place. The glass is called aventurine. If you could manage to send me some money, supposing you think it would be a good idea for me to stay on at Fontainebleau, I'd be awfully grateful.

"You'll let him stay, Alec?" Elise urged.

"I suppose in one way it does solve a problem. I had been wondering if my brother Duncan would have him until this tutor I've found for him is ready. But this woman—a Jewess I take it—ought to be able to keep him out of further mischief."

Alexander Ogilvie handed Elise the letter from Miriam Stern:

Dear Mr Ogilvie,

We are near neighbours in Hampstead, but I have never had the pleasure of meeting you, and so I must ask your pardon for writing to you like this. Your boy has been extremely kind to my boy at St James's School, and he has always been a welcome visitor at my house. Yesterday to our great pleasure we met him by chance at

the Exhibition and I persuaded him to come back with us to a little house I have taken in the forest here for the rest of the summer, my younger boy Julius being under treatment by Dr Belot, the Paris specialist, and so having to visit him every week. Now I am writing to ask you to allow John to remain with us for the rest of the summer. I hear from John that you have recently gone through a most anxious time, and I hope I may be allowed to express my deep sympathy. Naturally my request must depend on any plans you have already made for John; but we should all be grievously disappointed if his visit to us has to be cut short. I am arranging that both my boys shall do a certain amount of serious study of French, and if you think this would be advantageous for John I will see that he works with equal seriousness.

Forgive me if I intrude unjustifiably, but it has occurred to me that you might care to be reassured about John's rather foolish adventure in Geneva. Nothing could have been more stupid than gambling away his money like that, so stupid that it was not surprising you should have wondered if that was the whole explanation. You may feel perfectly at ease. I am satisfied that everything happened exactly as John told you. He has certainly had a lesson, and perhaps you will think as I do that a sharp lesson of such a kind at an impressionable age will be good for him. I fancy he is unlikely to gamble again for some time. He has not told you, I understand, that when the 'relief' money did not arrive after a miserable week of waiting without a centime he finally spent two nights in the open and had no food for thirty-six hours. This needn't have happened, but John with the self-consciousness of seventeen years old got into

his head that the management of his hotel were regarding him with suspicion as an impostor!

I need not waste any more of your time with my screed; but I cannot close without trying to let you know with what affection we regard John. I had intended to comment on the joy of finding a boy of his age and gifts so devoid of egoism, so immediately susceptible to the point of view of other people, and so unfailingly considerate.

We all hope so very much that you will let John stay on with us.

Yours sincerely,
Miriam Stern

"What an encouraging letter, Alec!" Elise exclaimed. "I'm beginning to feel a little injured over having been denied anything more than a distant glimpse of him from the stalls at Covent Garden. He's evidently a charmer. Of course you'll let him stay with this Mrs Stern. You think she's a Jewess?"

"I should imagine so by the names. Well, well, I suppose it's always the same story between father and son, and I may be partly to blame."

"Dear Alec, if you could be to John as you are to me, and if he could be to you as he evidently is to Mrs Stern, the rest of the world wouldn't have a look in. How sweet it was of him to buy that present for us, and how tactful to resist giving us a cuckoo-clock. You'll write to Mrs Stern, I suppose?"

"Yes, yes, certainly I shall. As I said, this is a solution of a mild problem."

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In years to come Miriam Stern was to look back to this summer of 1900 through clouds of butterflies. The coincidence of Julius's new health with the passion—for nothing milder than passion it was—fired in him by a chance spark but fanned by John's enthusiasm gave those butterflies a quasi-angelic significance. Emil's protest against the destruction of life was not regarded, and indeed he himself regarded it no longer, for although he would not collect on his own account, he was willing to join in the chase on behalf of his brother. Julius became an unqualified bug-hunter with net, poison-bottle, pins, cork-lined specimen-boxes, and all the rest of the paraphernalia. Those violinist's fingers set swallow-tail or hair-streak with equal delicacy, and it was a joy to watch him when he was not actually playing music concentrated at last on something instead of sitting moodily in corners; but what pleased his mother most was to see him racing down a rough slope in a reckless diagonal in pursuit of some swift flyer like an oak-eggar or standing in a woodland ride to observe the silver-washed fritillaries drop like autumn leaves from the shade of the trees to a sunlit patch of green below. Miriam Stern had enough music in herself not to feel cut off completely from her younger son; but she recognized that tendency, which insufficiently examined though it might have been could be called at least provisionally a biological law, to make music in its profounder implications an exclusively masculine art. During this banishment of Julius from the concert-platform she had been continuously aware of his persistent withdrawal into that moon-cold world of abstract music from which she was as inexorably excluded as from the higher mathematics. An indifference to external ugliest

ness, in fact a distinct encouragement of external ugliness, was a characteristic of the higher musical mind. The inward ear seemed to delight in humiliating the outward eye. Scarcely an instrument possessed even as much pictorial beauty as was usually conferred on any object which perfectly fulfilled its functional purpose. Moreover, the development of an instrument's utility had always increased the ugliness of its form. A chest of viols in the seventeenth century presented a more seemly appearance than a modern string quartet. Inside and out the pianoforte was unsightly. What was more awkward than a bassoon unless it were a trombone? The very playing of most instruments distorted the human countenance. And the concert hall or saloon! The amount of meaningless turnery in the decoration, the gilt and the gaudiness, the gimcrack music-stands. The ugliness could not be explained by the domination of Germanic taste in the world of music. It was more probable that German taste was so bad just because the Teutonic mind had produced the largest proportion of great music. It was not without significance that the German nation was myopic. Julius from earliest childhood had been blind to external beauty. Twice only had his mother seen him excited by the visible object, once when he had examined snow-crystals with a powerful magnifying-glass and a second time when he had looked at diatoms through a microscope. Indeed, when he had first displayed this sudden interest in butterflies his mother had supposed it was as objects for the microscope that they interested him. He was indeed fascinated by the shapes and colours of the eggs, those minute spheres and pears and oblongs of delicate green or apricot or ivory; but that enjoyment was completely

subordinate to the pleasure of the chase. When Miriam watched the boys, it seemed to her that in capturing butterflies that summer in Fontainebleau they caught the fleeting moment itself. There was one day in particular when on the outskirts of the forest, beholding hundreds of clouded-yellows in a great field of clover, she could not keep from crying out:

"Oh, my dears, my dears, the golden minutes of this golden summer are staying with us."

John thought it would be jolly to put three clouded-yellows in a box and present them to Mrs Stern, a minute from each of the three who owed to her their gold. He had ambitions to buy a golden box for this commemoration, but they were discouraged by Emil who thought sandalwood was just as suitable and a great deal cheaper. The next time Julius went in to Paris with his mother to see the doctor, John and Emil roamed off to look for a suitable box, and by good fortune found one of gilded filigree in the shape of a small basket. John whose mind was still on pure gold insisted that a small plate was to be affixed on which was to be engraved:

THE SUMMER OF 1900

"It's a waste of money," Emil declared.

"I'm paying for the plate myself," John replied. "We can go shares over the box."

Emil fought back the impulse to agree to this as an unquestionable bargain and hoped when he insisted on going shares with John in the golden inscription that his temptation had not been noticed. After buying the box they went to a Duval restaurant for lunch, when John demanded frogs for himself.

"Frogs?" Emil repeated. "Did you say frogs?"

"Yes, I said frogs. Have you any objection to watching me eat frogs?"

"I was only rather surprised by your courage."

"Look here, Emil, I wish you'd give up treating me as if I were an English tripper," John protested indignantly.

"I do not pretend to your cosmopolitan omniscience, but at least I can hope to acquire some of it with practice."

When John tasted his first frog he shuddered. His previous experience of the French mind had not led him to suppose that it could tolerate and even extol anything so repulsive.

"You don't seem to like your frogs," Emil jeered.

"Oh yes, I do," John contradicted loftily. However profound his disgust he was determined not to give Emil a chance to jeer at his insularity of taste.

"You don't give that impression. They're very like chicken, after all. Think of them as birds, if the thought of eating a frog upsets you."

"Don't be so damned condescending. Do you think I'm still in the nursery and can't eat my food without having to make a game of it?"

John took another mouthful; but try as he might he could not conceal his disgust. They might look like birds' legs: they tasted like the legs of decayed crabs.

"There's a very queer smell in this restaurant," Emil observed.

"Is there? I suppose it's the mixture of food," said John.

Emil leant over the table.

"My god!" he exclaimed.

"What's the matter?"

"The frogs! They're bad!"

The waitress agreed with Emil. The dish was removed. By the expression on her face it looked as if the cook was in for a rough few minutes.

"I'm glad frogs don't taste like that when they're fresh," said John pensively. "It was beginning to shake my confidence in the French nation. Still, I think I'll wait a bit before I try them again."

"I wonder why you have this passion for the French?" Emil asked. Then lowering his voice, he went on, "I should have thought the Dreyfus case would have sickened anybody of the French. That business stank and tasted worse than bad frogs."

"Well, we can't argue about that in a restaurant, though I think there's a great deal to be said for the anti-Dreyfusard position. Anyway, the revolting self-righteousness of the English Press was enough to make one think so."

"If you think like that I wonder you can bear the company of Jews so bravely as you do. Or do you accept them in the same spirit as you tried to eat those frogs—an unpleasant experience which must be endured for the sake of your worldly education?"

"Now, look here, Emil, you're not going to make me angry. You know you're talking rot. If the whole of the anti-Dreyfusard spirit were merely an unreasonable anti-Semitic outburst I wouldn't bother to consider it, and you know that. But, as I see them, the anti-Dreyfusards are trying to re-establish aristocracy in France, and from that point of view there is something to be said for them. It's unfortunate they should have made a Jew the victim, because that obscured the whole issue. . . ."

"You imagine I am Dreyfusard because I'm a Jew," Emil interrupted. "Not at all. It's just because these shoddy French militarists dreaming of revenge for the humiliation of the war against Prussia are trying to build up a mock aristocracy in a country whose chief contribution to civilization is that it recognized just over a century ago the rottenness of its existing aristocracy, that I hate French militarism."

"Well, look here, we really can't argue this out in a restaurant," John objected. "Besides, you and I will never be on the same political side. I don't see why that's necessary. It doesn't make me less fond of you personally."

"But it ought to," Emil declared. "And it will ultimately. A friendship cannot endure without agreement on the general principles of human conduct."

"Then why not make the most of it now?" said John. "I don't yet feel strongly enough about any question not to see the other side."

"Feel!" Emil scoffed. "The sooner you give up feeling about things and start thinking about them the better."

"That's a distinction without a difference in the present argument. I've got to be in the wrong to-day for some reason, even if it's only verbally. But to return to what I was saying. I enjoy your ability to think, if you insist on calling it that, so strongly. I envy Fitzgerald his political passion. I see that you and he simply could not be friends, now or ever. But I am still able to be friends with both of you."

"I believe the chief reason I've been enjoying this butterfly-chasing," said Emil gloomily, "is that you're so like a butterfly yourself."

That night, after one of those delicious suppers of skimmed-milk cheese and lettuce and fruit to which John would always look back as another expression of this airy summer, Emil sat with his mother in the patch of garden won from the majestic woodland around. Julius and John had gone off to sugar the tree-trunks for moths. The night was warm. The smell of lush bracken bore down upon the spicy garden scents. On the dark body of the sky the stars seemed to lie like heavy gems cut in the olden style with large facets.

"I'm afraid, you know," he told her, "that John will never do anything really worth while. What do you think, *ma mère*?"

"I think it's much too early to give any opinion on that point," Miriam Stern replied.

"Yes, but for instance this notion of his that he is going to write. What's he going to write about?"

"Won't that be a problem John will be called upon to decide for himself?"

"Yes, yes," Emil assented impatiently, "that goes without saying. The point I'm making is that there are no signs at present of his being justified in supposing that he will be able to write. It doesn't seem to me reasonable at this stage in the development of humanity to write unless one is convinced one has something to say which has not been said before."

"So you're going to limit writing to original poets and major prophets? What about entertainment?"

"Oh well, I suppose that will go on. But what an existence! To live by one's ability to amuse!"

"Shakespeare managed to do it."

"I doubt if his inspiration was a desire to amuse. He

merely took advantage of his ability to amuse in order to express himself."

"I wonder. I fancy he would have claimed that his primary business was entertainment. It seems to me that this conception of an artist's dignity is a modern conception taking its origin in a growing belief that humanity has put aside childish things. Every year from now on we shall feel more and more acutely the effects of popular education, which can only mean for at least a century and probably for much longer a steady debasement of taste and an ever-increasing scepticism founded upon cheapened knowledge. That will drive people like you, Emil, into a deliberately exclusive and very small intellectual and artistic minority, from the clostral calm of which you will dream and scheme the improvement of the immense majority. You are anxious that John shall follow you. But I don't think John ever will."

"No, he's the perfect butterfly."

"He may be. But even butterflies have their uses. They fertilize many flowers during their beautiful existence. However, I think John's butterfly condition may be merely the expression of a more romantic youthful attitude than your own, Emil. And is not the fact that you love him so much a tribute to his butterfly condition? What are you in love with except with his quick ways and vivid colour? What exasperates you except your inability to catch him in your own net?"

Miriam Stern was tempted to tell her sixteen-year-old son that she herself could surrender to a love for John Ogilvie which would be considered by most people as infelicitous as his own; but although her intimacy with her sons was so much profounder than the usual maternal

relationship in adolescence and without a trace of that hostility which in masculine nations like the English and the German so often marks the relation between mother and son at the onset of manhood, she could not bring herself to the pitch of such frankness. Emil in turn was thrown back into his secret self by his mother's last question, which to be answered truthfully would have demanded a revelation he was not prepared to grant anybody in cold blood.

"I shall go in and do some work," he announced.

His mother stayed in the garden, leaning back in the wicker chair and gazing upon the cendent heavy stars of the August night. What actually was it that forbade her to bind John Ogilvie with the silken threads of passion? Was it the dread of seeing him chilled by the warmth in herself? And if so was it regard for her own pride or his which prompted such a dread? Was it a perception of ugliness in the physical union of a youth of seventeen with a woman twenty years older than himself? There should be no ugliness in that if she were able to rouse desire, no ugliness if she were strong enough to release him at the moment of recognizing that he was near to passing from her. Was she not entitled to claim that in giving herself to this boy she was giving him wisdom without the bitterness of experience?

Miriam for a while deliberately allowed the sensuous languor of the night to obsess her fancy. She moved restlessly in the chair as if her body sought his body. Her lips were slightly parted as if the warm air of this star-laden night were the breath of his kiss. She thrust her hand down to her left breast, calling it in fancy his hand and trying to imagine whether he would shrink from the

softness of a breast that had sacrificed contour and resilience to maternity. But if she surrendered to desire could she face the eyes of Emil and the eyes of Julius? By bringing into the world two prodigies was she not thereby denied for ever the gratification of *la femme moyenne sensuelle*? Fulfilment had been hers already; what remained was mere gratification. An ugly word. And if the word was ugly, was not the action ugly? Yet might she not by summoning the courage to face that word and admitting that the impulse was in her own case gratification, give to him something far beyond the gratification of immature desire? Might not Emil have been right in attributing to John a dissipation of energy and emotion and thought that might become an incurable habit? Could she not with the power which physical intimacy would bestow upon her concentrate in a deep pool the shallow rills? Let her accept the brutal fact that he was to give her that perfection of bodily passion which she had never known and which unless she found it in his youth it was too late for her to know now. Let her recognize how madly she craved that red bow of a mouth, how sharply her breasts ached for those long brown fingers, how much she yearned to behold those deep blue eyes as flickering points of sexual energy, how easily in the sweet shamelessness of passion she could afford to mock at the ivory profile of the young matron moving sedately toward middle-age. So be it. But in return? Already he was under the sway of her taste, willing to accord an authority to her he had granted to none. What an influence might be hers if she could make him even for a year depend on her body to reach her mind! But suppose that the racial distance between them should suddenly be stressed by her own

fault? Suppose that her physical domination had been shattered before it ever attempted to assert itself? If he should draw back like a young Joseph, she would never know if it were her age or her race which had repelled him.

Miriam jumped up from her chair, and walked past a bed of white petunias towards the forest. The spicy garden scents were drowned in the pervading smell of the lush bracken. She felt as if she had left behind in that chair a foolish woman whose company had become intolerable. Presently lanterns came winking through the trees. It was the return of the moth-hunters.

"We struck a hatch of crimson-underwings," Julius announced solemnly. "I'm going in to net them right away."

"Walk with me for a while among the trees, John," said Miriam. "I've been sitting still too long in the garden and found it a little damp."

She put an arm in his as a challenge to herself. It was as if she demanded a proof of equanimity.

"I say, aren't you getting rather sick of having me here?" John asked.

"Not in the least, as none should know better than you, dear John."

"My father will be getting married to-morrow. Odd isn't it, to think of a man of his age falling in love, and even more odd to think of a young woman falling in love with him?"

"You think it's odd, do you?"

"Well, I don't believe I should like to fall in love when I'm forty-seven. I should think it a little undignified. Even if I were sure the young woman was in love with me I should feel that other people thought it ridiculous."

"Do you think that other people count for much in a matter like that?" Miriam asked. They had reached a mossy ride between overarching trees which hid the stars. In such a verdurous solitude common opinion sounded a little shrill.

"Not really of course," John agreed. "But if one happened to hear what they thought it would be humiliating."

"I think, and I say this with every apology in advance, that you are still under the influence of school life which so far as I can make out is ruled entirely by what other people think and say. Look back at your schoolfellows now, John. Do they mean anything to you?"

"Nothing at all."

"Then won't you treat the world like a school from which you have escaped?"

"Well, but you know, Mrs Stern, the odd thing is that I like people. Theoretically I despise them, but actually I like them. I'm just the opposite of Emil. He loves them in the mass theoretically, but he really hates them individually."

"Poor Emil! He's a born humanitarian, I fear. But so many of us Jews are like that. You must allow for the effect of two thousand years of prejudice, hostility, and persecution. Even with you I notice he is often difficult, and his devotion is limitless. It really is, John."

"Mrs Stern, I want to tell you something about myself."

Miriam's heart leapt. What should she reply in this darkness and solitude if . . .

"It was about something that happened at Geneva, Mrs Stern. I met a French girl there who asked me to go home with her."

"And you went," Miriam murmured.

John supposed that the deadness of her voice implied disgust at such a piece of casual libertinage.

"Yes. But it wasn't . . . of course, I can't very well explain what it was," said John lamely, for he was kicking himself by now for ever having made such a confession.

"It was just an adventure, eh?" said Miriam, hoping that her voice did not sound discouraging.

"Yes, I suppose you could call it that. I know you're shocked, but I'm not shocked by it. I wouldn't have told you if I had been. It was rather beautiful really. At least it was beautiful until I wanted her to be sentimental, and then she made me feel rather a fool."

"At least this French girl seems to have been honest," commented Miriam, half to herself.

"And she was awfully decent to me," he added.

"I think I should call her a fortunate young woman. Thank you for telling me, John."

"Fortunate?" he repeated in perplexity.

"Put it that you were both fortunate—you to escape the harpy you might have chosen, she for having escaped if only for a few hours the cynicism of her profession."

"Well, in a way she was cynical."

"Did she take money from you?"

"No, no. But I don't think she thought I was anything but a joke."

"Ah? Emotionally cynical."

"Yes, you could call it that. She was quite right of course. I see that already. At the time I wanted to mean something to her."

"And she wouldn't flatter you."

But I should have flattered him. And in a short while he

would have been bored by it. And I should have tried to keep him mine. And perhaps one day he would have written another '*Adolphe*'.

"How well you understand everything, Mrs Stern. I wonder if I should have been able to tell my mother what I have told you. I suppose not."

"Come back to the house now, and I will play you some Schumann."

After Miriam had played right through the *Kinder-scenen* on the Erard in the studio, she played *Warum?*

"Why indeed?" she murmured to herself when the little piece was finished.

"Why what?"

"Just a question I was asking myself, and I do not know the answer any more than I imagine poor Schumann knew the answer, when he put it at the head of that little piece of music."

Julius came in presently. The crimson-underwings had been set. He took his violin from the case.

"Bach?" John asked. He was always hoping for some Ariadne of an occasion which would provide him with the freedom of the maze.

Julius shook his head.

"I think I'll play Beethoven's Sonata in F at my first concert," he told his mother. "That, and perhaps the Kreutzer and the Mozart in B flat with a few fireworks at the end. I thought I might give two chamber concerts this autumn at Wigmore Hall. Then by next spring I ought to be able to face a concerto. I thought it would be rather a good idea if we could persuade that girl we heard last week at the Salle Verte to play with me."

"Renée Noirtier?" his mother said a little doubtfully.

She was wondering if Renée, who was the perfect *jeune fille* of the French illustrator, with her two blonde plaits and her big porcelain-blue eyes, was the right pianist for Julius. She was wondering too whether he was choosing the right music for his reappearance.

"You think I shall overplay her, *ma mère*? Or perhaps you think I shall overplay the music I have chosen?"

"Overplay the Kreutzer?" his mother queried, with a smile.

"Well, of course we should have to see if Renée Noirtier was up to that. Let's try the Beethoven in F now."

"This is usually called the Spring Sonata, John," Miriam Stern looked back over her shoulder to tell him.

John was grateful to find that the music of this sonata sounded as simple as the music of nursery rhymes.

"Julius!" his mother exclaimed. "You played that quite exquisitely."

"The result of chasing butterflies with John," he proclaimed.

"What's the result of chasing butterflies with John?" demanded Emil, who came into the studio at that moment.

"Julius's playing of Beethoven's Sonata in F. I wish you had heard it, Emil," said his mother. "It was indeed a Spring sonata. It sounded as cool as a fountain on this heavy August night."

"Primroses by sheltered rills," John quoted from Keats.

"Now don't all get too pictorial," Emil warned them, with a hint of jealousy in his tone. "Or Julius will never play it again."

The young violinist knitted his heavy eyebrows and looked at his elder brother.

"I'm feeling rather pictorial myself," he announced. "In fact I have been thinking what a sweet platform pair Renée and I shall make. Little Boy Blue and Little Bo Peep."

"Who's Renée?" asked his brother.

"That girl we heard at the Salle Verte last week."

"You're not going to play with her?"

"Why not? I thought she was good within her limitations."

"Pussy-eyed affected little minx," Emil scoffed.

"She doesn't play with her eyes, you ass."

"I thought she looked rather attractive," John put in.

"I thought she looked frightful," said Emil.

"And who's being pictorial now?" Julius demanded.

"Enough! Enough!" Miriam Stern besought. "Now you're like quarrelsome sparrows in spring. Let's play our Ludo and put music on one side to-night."

Ludo was John's introduction. Miriam, in thinking that he was the first person who had known how to make her children childish, thought of that woman sitting by the white petunias under the cendent stars, and dropped her like an old shawl.

In mid-September a letter came for John from his father in the Tyrol:

Dear John,

*I am glad to say that Elise is now herself again.
We are staying here until the end of the month, and shall*

then snatch a few days at Como before we return to London.

I have arranged with the Reverend George Damson of Milbourne Vicarage in Loamshire that you will spend at any rate this autumn with him. He is an extremely pleasant fellow and will have two or three other pupils. Then if you are anxious to go abroad next year we may be able to arrange something. You had better leave Fontainebleau as soon as you get this and let Mr Damson know the date of your arrival. You'll find it pleasant country and you'll be near enough to London to come up for an occasional week-end.

Elise sends you her love.

*Your affectionate father,
A. O.*

"Well, it's better than school anyway," John decided.

He left Fontainebleau on a golden morning that would frame this vivid summer in memory. The garden was full of red-admiral butterflies and dark velvety dahlias. The forest was immotionable. The swallows were hawking high above the tallest trees.

The Sterns came to Paris to see him off for Havre whence he was crossing by the night boat to Southampton. On such a day even Paris was serene, and it was not until the noise of the Gare de St. Lazaire that John realized the summer of 1900 was ended.

"I shall try to get up and hear you play with Renée Noirtier," he told Julius.

The double appearance had been arranged with Renée's fat mother and father, a voluble business.

The Sterns themselves were remaining only for

another week in France, but John had thought it wise to travel at once. He could not bear to argue about this time at Fontainebleau even by letter.

John tried to thank Mrs Stern; but she stopped him.

"It is I who should be thanking you, dear John."

She looked down the platform along which Julius was walking in order to examine with an air of the profoundest interest every compartment of the train in turn.

"You have made him young again," she said.

"Oh no, it's because he's well again," John replied.

A minute later the crowded train moved out of the station. John went immediately to the dining-car, and found himself sitting opposite an impressive old gentleman with a full white beard, a beaky nose, high cheekbones, and a rosy countenance.

"Wise fellow," he observed to John. "There won't be a seat in the car presently. Never known the Havre train so full."

They talked the commonplaces of travellers for a while until presently the old gentleman asked John's name.

"Ogilvie, eh? Well, I had an Ogilvy for a grandmother. She was from the Ogilvys of Dunlagas. Which Ogilvys are you?"

"We are from the Ogilvies of Drumbeg."

"Ah, I'm not so well up in the Ogilvy lines. Do you spell yourself with an 'ie' or a 'y'?"

"With an 'ie'. My grandfather left Scotland as a boy, and either his father or his grandfather was a younger son of John Ogilvie of Drumbeg. I know my great-grandfather married a Macleod."

The old gentleman crimsoned with excitement.

"A Macleod? A Macleod, do you say? Which Macleods?" he asked urgently.

"I'm not quite sure; but she came from Sutherland."

"Assynt?"

John looked apologetic.

"Yes, it was Assynt as a matter of fact."

*I charge thee, boy, if e'er thou meet
With one of Assynt's name—
Be it upon the mountain side,
Or yet within the glen.
Face him, as thou wouldest face the man
Who wronged thy sire's renown.
Remember of what blood thou art,
And strike the caitiff down!*

The damning lines in Aytoun's *Lays of the Scottish Cavaliers* had made John disinclined to pursue the history of his great-grandmother in case he should find himself under the stigma of descent from the Macleod who sold Montrose to the Covenanters for four hundred bolls of meal.

"We're probably cousins," declared the old gentleman. "I'm a Macleod . . . Torquil Macleod, the tenth of Ardvore in Assynt. And the last," he added. "Married three times. One daughter by every wife. Wives all dead. Three daughters unmarried. What was your great-grandmother's first name?"

"I don't remember. But I expect I could find out from one of my uncles. My father doesn't take much interest in family history."

"You find out the name of your great-grandmother, and as soon as I get back to Ardvore I'll dig her out. Whom did she marry?"

"Patrick Ogilvie. He was a lawyer in Edinburgh at the beginning of this century."

"Oh, we'll dig her out without a doubt," exclaimed the Laird of Ardvore enthusiastically. "And I'll be surprised if we're not cousins."

When John and his new friend reached the steamer they found that every berth was taken.

"Never mind. We'll have to rig up a corner in the smoking-saloon," said Ardvore.

But the smoking-saloon proved smelly and crowded.

"Come on. It's a fine night. We'll sit out on deck under my plaid."

Ardvore covered his white locks with a deerstalker, and led the way on deck. John put him at four inches taller than himself, which would have made him six foot three. Presently they were ensconced on two deck-chairs in a snug corner aft, with Ardvore's heavy plaid over their knees, and a couple of pillows. The night was calm; but out in the Channel there was an autumnal chill in the air, and a light fog blurred the moon.

Soon after they were settled John happened to address his new friend as Mr Macleod.

"Don't call me Mr Macleod, young man. I'm not my own factor."

John could not believe that he was meant to address this genially fierce old gentleman as 'Macleod' and went back to the 'sir' he had been using.

"I didn't mean that," he was told. "You should call me Ardvore."

This gave John a romantic thrill. Clanranald . . . Appin . . . Seaforth . . . Keppoch . . . Lochiel . . .

"I've never been in the Highlands," he sighed. "In fact I've never been in Scotland."

"You're coming to stay with me," Ardvore announced. "But don't forget about that great-grandmother. Don't you dare arrive at Ardvore without the details, or I'll shut the door in your face, and if a Highlandman shuts the door in your face it means you must have committed an unforgivable crime against man and an inexpiable sin against God. Yes, you're coming to stay with me at Ardvore. And I'll show you the claymore with which my great-grandfather cut down three dragoons at Falkirk on January 17th, 1746. Not many Macleod lairds were out. Of Siol Thorcuil, that is Macleods of Lewis, Mac Ghille Chaluim and my great-grandfather; of Siol Thormaid, that is Macleods of Harris and Dunvegan, Bernera and young Muiravonside. Five Macleods went from Assynt with my great-grandfather to join the Earl of Cromartie, and what I'm hoping is that one of them was your great-grandmother's grandfather."

John glowed. That would obliterate the stigma, if such a stigma was attached to his ancestry, of Macleod of Assynt.

"I'll write to my uncle as soon as I get down to this parson's place in Loamshire where I'm going."

"We can't put off this visit too long, Ogilvie. Hang it, I'd like you to come up this winter. When you get to my age . . . what age do you think I am?"

John hesitated.

"Sixty-five?"

Ardvore smacked his knees with delight and laughed with a roar that might have come from a man of forty.

"Seventy-eight, a'bhallaich," he shouted.

John was under the impression that the old man had called him 'varlet'. It was the first Gaelic word he had heard.

"You don't believe me, eh?" Ardvore demanded, turning round and fixing John with a pair of glacial blue eyes.

"Yes, of course I do," John assured him hastily.

"Ah, it was the Gaelic. A'bhallaich. Boy. Simple, isn't it? But here's something that will make you sit up. Do you know that I've spoken to a man who remembered Culloden? I have. And if you live to my age and tell the story I'm going to tell you now, most people will think you a liar. When I was eight years old, that was in the year 1830, I was staying with some Mackenzies in Wester Ross. In those days there was an inn at Gairloch over the door of which was nailed a sheep's skull. I was standing outside in the road and looking up at it and wondering why it was there when an old man came along and asked me, in Gaelic of course, what I was looking at. I told him, and he asked me how old I was. Pity you can't understand Gaelic. These tales sound better in their own tongue. 'Eight years old, a'bhallaich?' he exclaimed. 'When I was eight years old I saw that sheep's skull nailed up on that door. That was nailed up there ann am bliadhna a 'Phrionnsa', that is to say in the Prince's Year. You know what that was?'"

"Not 1745?" John asked in awe.

"From the summer of '45 to the summer of '46 is still called the Prince's Year. In 1746 that old bodach was a boy of eight standing outside the inn and watching boats coming over from Lewis—Seaforth's men in them. It was a calm cold grey morning in April, the kind of morn-

ing we often get in the west when it's blowing like a Cossack on the east coast. While he was standing there a fellow rode up to the inn-door on a shaggy pony. His head was bound up in a bloody bandage, and he knocked on the inn-door. 'Cabarfeidh! Cabarfeidh!' he cried. Out came a man in a fine laced coat with the sheep's head he had been eating in his hand. It was Seaforth himself. The messenger had brought the news of Culloden. Seaforth ran down to the side of the loch and with the sheep's head waved back the boats. Then he flung it in the road, called for his horse and servants, and rode back east to congratulate Cumberland. It might have changed history if he had called out his clan a month earlier. The boy he left staring after him picked up the sheep's head and was beginning to gnaw what remained of the flesh when the innkeeper took it from him and nailed it above the door to commemorate the incident. The boy lived to be ninety-two and tell the story to another boy of eight years old. Now I tell it to you, and if you live to my age—how old are you now?—well, if you live to September 1960, you'll be able to boast that you met a man who met a man that remembered a fatal April two hundred and fourteen years ago. Of course nobody will believe you, but that won't matter to you. Nobody minds at seventy-eight whether people believe him or not. He's beginning to think about what he believes himself. It's time. Now then, dean cadal, which means 'go to sleep'."

Torquil Macleod of Ardvore pulled the deerstalker down a little further, tied the flaps a little tighter under the chin, and five minutes later was snoring on a queer reed-like note. John leaned back, gazing at the blurred moon,

and begging fortune not to deny him that visit to Sutherland.

At Southampton John parted from his new friend who having let Ardvore until the end of September was on his way to join his three daughters at Bournemouth.

"Now don't forget, Iain Mac ghille bhuidhe, I want the name of your great-grandmother and if possible the name of her father."

Ardvore with a wave of the arm passed on to deal with the problem of transporting himself to Bournemouth, and John took his seat in the train for Waterloo.

After he had finished his packing at Church Row, he decided not to go down to Milbourne until the next day, and he took the opportunity to investigate the claims of various makers of bicycles for the new machine with a free-wheel which his father had agreed to his buying.

"You're going in for a free-wheel, are you, sir?" the man at the bicycle shop in Hampstead High Street asked a little dubiously. "Well, sir, I'm going to be perfectly frank with you and say right away that, though I believe the free-wheel has come to stay, it might be better to wait a little until we're sure they've got it all right."

"I'm going to have a free-wheel," said John firmly. "I tried one in France, and it makes all the difference to bicycling."

"Well, sir, you know what you want. Only I thought I ought to warn you. What about this Beeston Humber? A beauty. Thirty-eight guineas with . . ."

"No, I can't spend as much as that."

"Well, there's this Sunbeam with the oil-bath and celluloid gear-case . . . twenty-five . . ."

"How much is this Rover?"

"Ah, that's a good machine. Sixteen guineas. Two rim brakes. You want to be careful not to jam the back brake too hard when you back-pedal."

"I'll try it if I may."

"Certainly, sir. You'll be very careful, won't you? These free-wheels are a bit tricky at first in traffic."

John was so much delighted by the exquisite sense of leisure conferred by the free-wheel that he felt he must bicycle down to Kensington and call on the Fenwicks and the Fitzgeralds. The foreman at the bicycle shop allowed him three pounds on his old machine and was perfectly willing to send in the bill to Mr Alexander Ogilvie on his return to Church Row.

John was extremely careful how he propped his new bicycle against the portico of the Fenwicks' house in Gladwyn Road, and while he was waiting for the front-door to open he was wrapt in such an affectionate contemplation of it that he did not hear the door open and was quite startled to look round and find the maid standing there. Six months ago his bicycle was always falling over, so eager was he to run up the steps and note through the coloured glass on the panels the dim form of the maid approaching to admit him to Connie's presence.

Mr and Mrs Fenwick and Miss Hetty were away. They had gone down to Southampton where Miss Connie was acting this week. They might be back next week, but they might not.

At Southampton, thought John, as he mounted his bicycle to free-wheel lazily along the roads which were seeming dusted with amber and cornelian in the late afternoon sunlight. He might have waited in Southampton and seen Connie on the professional stage. It was really a

little alarming to reflect that within six months of supposing her to be the central point of the universe he should be feeling not the slightest disappointment at having passed through Southampton without being aware of her presence.

Mrs Fitzgerald only was at home. The doctor and Edward were over in Kerry. Ellen was on tour.

"Edward will be wild at missing you, John," Mrs Fitzgerald told him. "He and his father shall be back next week. Edward is going to St Philip's Hospital. He tried to persuade the Doctor to let him go to Dublin, but I think the Doctor felt he might get too much involved in politics. He's deeper in them than ever nowadays. God save Ireland, John, but there are times when I fear for my boy, and with Ellen Mary doing this play-acting . . . ah, well, but you shan't be wanting to hear my troubles. And so you're after seeing a little of the great world."

John related his experience over *petits chevaux* and his meeting with Cissie Oliver in the church.

"Fancy that now in Geneva. It can't be such a black Protestant hole at all. But isn't it beautiful now to hear of a girl like that holding fast to her faith? I pray my Ellen Mary will not let this stage life make her forget her Catholic duties. I will write and tell her about this girl in Geneva. Indeed she's a lesson to all of us. Glory be to God Who guards His children, and our Blessed Lady will be having a special care for these wanderers. Will you tell me her name again now? Cissie Oliver? Poor child, to be given a name like that!"

"Yes, Cissie is pretty awful," John agreed.

"Oh, Cissie's not too bad at all. It would be for Saint

Cecilia they would have called her. But Oliver! To bear the name of that murdering devil from Hell! No matter, I will ask Father Peters to say a Mass for her intention."

It was a practical religion this Catholicism, John thought as he rode away from Trelawny Road, in the direction which would take him past the playing-fields of St James's. There was Cissie Oliver in Geneva with her St Anthony, and now here was Mrs Fitzgerald able in London to do something for a girl in the middle of Europe. Yes, it was a practical religion, and it seemed to confer on Catholics an assurance and a security which made them curiously independent of this world. But was it anything more than the expression of accumulated human wisdom? Was it true in the way it was true that he was free-wheeling down the slope of this railway bridge to the gates of the school ground? It would be a pretty good shock to die to-night and find that it was true. Oh, but it could not be true. Scientific progress was making it more and more impossible to believe. Yes, but scientific progress at the same time was making the material world detestable for everybody who was not prepared to sacrifice everything to a material advantage. Suppose scientific progress were an illusion? Or suppose the ultimate result of scientific progress must be the destruction of what it had created? It was as likely a result as any other. That would make scientific progress useless, and if it was useless, did not that cast a doubt upon its truth? It would not do to ignore religion in the search for political truth. This autumn he would have an opportunity to do a lot of reading and thinking about religion. Religion might give him a focus. Emil had been right to accuse him of feeling instead of thinking. So far he had been almost

entirely dependent upon his emotions to discover his opinions.

During this meditation John had been leaning over his bicycle and staring at the bland golden face of the school clock, without realizing that he was doing so. Abruptly he perceived it.

At present that damned clock was doing no harm; but on Tuesday morning it would again be marking the hours of wasted time for a herd of slaves. And he might have been one of them if his father had not met Elise and married her. He owed a good deal to Elise. With any luck he and Elise ought to be friends.

John leapt on his bicycle and pedalled furiously away from that great crimson prison-house. Yes, there might be something in religion, since certainly none of it ever penetrated into those dusty shades, and when he remembered how much of what was good and true and beautiful school excluded from a boy's life, that was a weighty testimony to religion.

John decided that tea was a better meal than lunch at which to meet strangers in bulk for the first time. So he took a train from Liverpool Street which brought him to Loam about three o'clock. He piled his luggage on a fly and mounted his bicycle to ride the four miles to Milbourne.

There was a long ascent from the outskirts of the county town to an undulating plateau of large fields varied by occasional parks with glimpses of the chimneys of some large house among the trees. From the further edge of this plateau the road ran down in a steep zigzag to Milbourne, a conventionally picturesque village beside a stream backed by high woods through which the road

ascended to wide rolling pastures beyond. The church lay a quarter of a mile westward to the left of the village, an unimpressive Early English building with a squat tower which had been robbed of any character it had ever possessed by bad restoration in the early 'seventies. Nevertheless, its open situation in vivid green water-meadows gave it a certain charm which even the Vicarage, a square red-brick building designed in mock gothic probably by the same architect who had spoilt the church, could not quite escape, although in the case of the Vicarage an indiscriminate planting of trees and shrubs had spoilt the tranquillity of the situation and given it a fussy suburban look.

As John bicycled round the meaningless curve of the shrub-bound drive and came in view of the gothic porch overhung with purple clematis still in sparse bloom, and the gothic stone window-frames among the reddening Virginia creeper on the red-brick walls, he decided that something would have to be done to force the pace of life in this Vicarage. He had already spent too many years with red-brick gothic.

The Reverend George Damson could have been accepted as a thoroughly representative English clergyman of the period. He had enjoyed the advantage of education at Rugby while the Arnold tradition was still undimmed, and, from the hour when riding back wet through from a meet he had been inspired by the sight of Cambridge in the November dusk to devote his life to the service of Almighty God, he had vowed to make the profession of a clergyman synonymous with the profession of a gentleman. Toleration, coupled with a belief in the moral benefit of clean healthy sport and the mission of

the British Empire spiritually stiffened by the Church of England to make the world a better place, was the outstanding article of the Vicar of Milbourne's creed. He recognized that there was a lot of good in Romanism, but he thought it unEnglish. He admitted, if without enthusiasm, that there was some good in Dissent. Where his toleration occasionally failed him was in his attitude toward the vanguard of the Oxford Movement.

"Let them be honest with themselves and with us," he used to say. "Let them go over. They will be happier, and we shall be happier."

His prejudice against the vanguard was due less to their devotions and ritualistic extravagance than to their habit of making up for it by an extreme parcimony over freedom of thought.

"We must move with the times," he used to say. "If the Church of England is to be a force it must shake off the rusty fetters of mediaevalism."

He greatly deplored the heresy hunts started from time to time by the mediaevalists, when broadminded bishops and deans were chased with a pack of dogmas from one end of the creed to the other. His toleration could not include the intolerant.

It is a delicate matter to enquire too closely into what a man really believes about the things not of this earth, and Mr Damson would have been the first to resent being pressed. It would have seemed to him unEnglish, and if he had ever attempted to define the sin against the Holy Ghost it would undoubtedly have involved conduct that was unEnglish. Probably his imagination (a rigorously limited imagination, for once again exercising the imagination was an unEnglish sport) saw Almighty

God as an immense nebula giving off somewhat in the form of gaseous emanations an influence composed of the qualities *sub specie aeternitatis* of a headmaster, a cricket umpire, an English naval captain, and Santa Claus. Mr Damson never consciously attributed to the Second Person of the Trinity an unEnglish influence. Indeed, he would have considered the slightest suggestion of such an attribution grossly blasphemous. At the same time, he felt more at home with the First Person, and when he knelt beside his bed every night to say his prayers he made a sincere effort to associate the feel of the mattress with the presence of God. On death Mr Damson abstained from meditating, though like most men who have led an existence without physical pain he could not help wondering sometimes if the actual process of dissolution was going to be an agony. However, that faint dread was very far from haunting his fancy.

In spite of the vagueness of his own beliefs the Vicar of Milbourne was sufficiently well equipped professionally to be regarded as a spiritual authority by his parishioners. His sermons were always of the same length. His prayers were always uttered in the same voice. He did not intrude upon their private affairs when he visited them. He was a burly John Bull to look at and, as any of his parishioners would have proclaimed with considerable self-satisfaction, he was a proper gentleman.

"Ah, there you are," the Vicar exclaimed in a roly-poly voice, emerging from the porch as John jumped off his bicycle. "I'd have come to meet you with the trap if you hadn't been so anxious to ride this new bike of yours." The Vicar would use such abbreviations occasionally with his pupils. He felt that they helped to build a bridge

between them and him. "A free-wheel, eh? Well, you'll want to look out on Milbourne Hill. Come along now, and meet my wife and your fellow-sufferers. She's out in the garden, I expect."

Mrs Damson presented the appearance which many thousands of Englishwomen present when gardening, and she did not markedly differ from many thousands of others when not gardening. She was a large faded blonde, her chin covered with a fine golden floss which glinted in the sun when she pushed back a large battered straw hat to welcome John with that air of synthetic maternity often to be observed among the wives of schoolmasters and coaches, and of consuls in small British communities abroad.

"Welcome to Milbourne, Mr Ogilvie. I've just been weeding my glads. Are you a gardener?"

John replied with an apologetic negative.

"It's grubby work, but *so* fascinating. Last Sunday we had our Harvest Festival, and we had quite an influx of visitors from London itself to see our decorations. So the garden is looking a little bare for the moment. And now come along, and I'll show you your room."

"Mr Ogilvie rode on in advance of his luggage, Alice," her husband told her.

"I'm sure he did," she gushed, in a tone which was intended to convey her profound sympathy with such an impulsive action, typical of youth at its best and brightest.

John found that his bedroom looked out on the hinterland of the tennis-lawn, a grassy stretch planted with isolated hawthorns, lilacs, and laburnums, beyond which were the walls of the kitchen-garden and a distant prospect of the pleasant valley of the Liddon.

"You don't mind a tub-bath, I hope?" Mrs Damson enquired. "We're so old-fashioned here that we haven't installed a bathroom. The Vicar always says that he will not put in a bathroom until the Oxford and Cambridge colleges have them."

John felt somewhat depressed by the atmosphere of the Vicarage. His companions proved to be three dull gawky youths sent here, it would seem, by their parents in the despairing hope that they would pass some examination or other, failure to pass which was blocking their worldly progress. He himself with no examination to pass before he went up to Exeter College, Oxford, next year, being exempt from Responsions by holding the Oxford and Cambridge Higher Certificate, was left to study French and German, in neither of which languages did the Vicar claim to be proficient. The other pupils regarded his freedom with an envious resentment and suspected favouritism on the part of the Vicar and Mrs Damson, superiority on the part of John himself.

"It's a pity you don't hunt," said the Vicar. "I hunted regularly once a week until five years ago. By the way, Ogilvie, I noticed you weren't at Matins this morning. Now don't think I'm trying to intrude upon your religious feelings; but it sets a good example, and it GETS ONE UP. That's why I have Matins every morning at eight o'clock. I know you won't mind my saying this. Yes, it sets an example to the servants. I think we're apt to forget the practical value of religion. Now, mind you, don't imagine I'm trying to force you to come to church. I am no bigot. But I dread slackness, and I should blame myself if . . . well, let's put it this way, Ogilvie, you're here in the position of a guest at the Vicarage, because

after all scholastic relations between us do not really exist. So I'm asking you to turn up at Matins in order to avoid stirring up any notions about favouritism among my pupils. With them, for their own good, I have to be more positive."

After this John never missed the Vicar's eight o'clock service, and gradually the voice of that burly man standing up behind the great brazen eagle to boom forth with equal emphasis the taboos of Leviticus and the Gospel narrative became as much a part of the morning as brushing his teeth.

In the middle of October John went up to London for a week-end and had his first meeting with Elise. She was tactfully affectionate in her attitude; but although he felt how unfair it was of him he could not help perceiving in her manner the ingredients from which in time would be evolved a synthetic maternity like Mrs Damson's. While they sat talking in his father's library he even discovered upon her chin that first downiness which with the passage of years would develop into the glinting flossiness of the Vicar's wife, and behind what was now the almost aggressive smartness of Elise he was aware of a battered straw hat, mould-stained gauntlets, a clumsy blue overall with a trowel in the pocket, and a pair of clodhopping boots.

Neither John nor his stepmother approached any nearer that afternoon to the reality of the relationship in which they stood toward each other than Mr Damson himself to

the reality of the Christian faith when he was booming forth the Lesson for the day at the tail of that great brazen eagle.

At the end of the talk, when at any moment the sound of the eminent barrister's key might be heard in the latch, Elise said quickly:

"I think you ought to know, John, that Alec—that your father felt he had been a little unfair to you over the Geneva adventure, but you know how difficult he finds it not to be shy with you. So do tell me if you are hopelessly bored at this place in Loamshire, and I'm sure he'll suggest your going abroad again if you want to."

Whether it was an ungenerous impulse not to be beholden to Elise or whether it was an equally ungenerous impulse to put his father in the wrong or whether it was merely an instinct to protect himself against the slightest opportunity for pitying him John would have found it hard to decide; but he certainly surprised himself by replying:

"Oh, no, thanks, I like it very much at Milbourne. The only thing is that I should like to get a commission in the First Volunteer Battalion of the Loamshire Regiment."

A week ago Doctor Meade who was the Captain in command of the Loam company had called in for tea at the Vicarage on his rounds, and the Vicar had suggested that volunteering was the very pastime to suit John's abundant leisure.

"Well, there's a vacancy for another subaltern in my company. Young Pacey-Foote is up at Oxford now, and that leaves me without a subaltern for most of these important winter months."

Doctor Meade was a large flat-faced genial Irishman with the best practice in Loam, one of many thousands of

Irishmen, Scotsmen, and Welshmen who were feeling that the eclipse of their countries by England was more than made up for by the extra light and warmth such an eclipse secured for themselves. If he had been accused of lacking patriotism he would have been indignantly annoyed. There was none of that cynicism in him which could be suspected in Doctor Fitzgerald. He loved the country of his adoption, hated the Nationalist M.P.'s, and gloried in the Imperial Idea. He was in fact what the average Englishman could not understand why every Irishman was not.

"Well, if you think any more of my suggestion," he had said to John last week, "roll into Loam on that dangerous machine of yours and we'll talk it over."

John was under the impression that he had thought no more about it; but presumably he had, and when Elise took the earliest opportunity to put the proposal before her husband pride forbade John to back out.

"The uniform and equipment will cost a good deal," he reminded his father.

"I'm prepared for that," said the barrister; and checked himself from adding that he hoped this commission would help to rouse the owner of it to a serious consideration of his career.

"If the boy should take up soldiering in earnest it would not be a bad thing," he told his wife when John was out of the way. "With his own money he could afford to join one of the Highland regiments, and they are giving commissions in the regular army to a certain number of University candidates now. I'm beginning to get a little anxious about his disinclination to choose a definite profession. I'd already made up my mind at his age that I was going to the Bar."

"But young men seem to have been more precocious in practical matters when you were young, Alec. I think modern education tends to protract adolescence," said Elise.

"I don't know, John's scrape in Geneva was pretty precocious. I never gambled away all I had at the age of seventeen."

Alexander Ogilvie laughed. He was thinking of what the effect of such a letter as he had received from John would have been upon the Minister of St Ninian's, South Kensington.

"I believe my father would have kicked me out of the house," he declared.

"Yes, there's plenty of precocity on the non-practical side," Elise agreed. "But I'm sure modern education tends to keep young men ridiculously dependent in other respects. Would you really like John to be a soldier, Alec? Surely he has too many brains and too much of Jane Austen's sensibility for the army?"

"Well, I think there will be a change in military matters after the disastrous exposure of this war. More university commissions are themselves a sign that the authorities want to encourage others beside the fool of the family to enter the army. Once the convention is broken there should be a career for the professional soldier with brains."

"Still, I wouldn't if I were you put too much hope in John's future as a soldier. I think this experience will be valuable and I'm all in favour of it; but I do not see him as anything except an artist."

"As a what?" Alexander Ogilvie exclaimed. "Why he couldn't enamel a washstand!"

"But I was thinking of him as a writer."

The barrister shook his head.

"Don't put that idea into his head, my dear."

"If he's meant to be a writer he won't require ideas from me, Alec."

When Elise said this, there flashed across Alexander Ogilvie's mind the picture of Athene sitting in that very chair where Elise was sitting now.

"But, Athene, it would really be better for the boy to go to a boarding-school."

"No, no, dearest Alec, I dislike intensely the boarding-school system. If a boy is the sort of boy who takes to the normal life of school he flourishes at the expense of weaklings, and I would not have John do that. On the other hand if a boy has the temperament of an artist the boarding-school is fatal. I detest all schools, to be candid, and I feel I am being weak in compromising by sending him to a day-school; but at least I can watch its daily effect upon him, and you must promise me, Alec, that if I think it is wiser to take him away you will not oppose it for reasons which have been argued over and over again. You have made a success of life, Alec. Therefore you may hold an exaggerated notion of the value of a conventional English education."

"We'll call it British, Athene."

"Alec, Alec, how pathetic you expatriated Scots are with your insistence on that quaint meaningless amalgam of Britain! In Cornwall we are prouder. We still regard England as a foreign country, and we lost our material independence hundreds and hundreds of years before Scotland lost hers."

"This is rather beside the point, Athene."

"The lawyer speaks. I bow to his logic. But, Alec, while John is young I want to be sure he has a chance of considering

some of the illogical ideas that his mother entertains in her crack-brained Celiberian head. And if she lets him go into a nice gentlemanly little preparatory school situated in a bracing position on a southerly slope of the Sussex downs, he will either come back with his noddle full of silly games or he will come back secretive and shy because his essential self has been violated by the communal self of an English preparatory school situated in that bracing position on the southerly slopes of the Sussex downs."

And a few months after this discussion Athene had died.

"What are you thinking about, Alec?"

"I was thinking about Athene."

"She must have been an exquisite creature," said his second wife, looking across at the portrait of Athene over his mantelpiece, which had been the wedding-present of an unsuccessful suitor, one of the young romantic painters of the early 'eighties, whose work was already discredited. It was the picture of a dark slip of a girl with burning eyes, ivory pale and gowned in a deep violet-crimson velvet, the colour of an almandine. She was standing among the grey trunks of ash-trees, listening.

"It seems absurd to think that when that picture was painted I was only eight years old," Elise sighed.

"She was an exquisite creature," Alexander Ogilvie murmured to himself. "But she was always strangely elusive. She was fey even when that picture was painted, and I'm sure she knew she would not live long when we had that talk."

"What talk?"

"Oh, I'd forgotten you had not heard it," said Alexander Ogilvie in some embarrassment. "It was a talk

about John's education. Elise, I'm grateful to you. I shall always take your advice about John. Perhaps I have not fully realized until now what is owing to a beautiful young woman who can love a middle-aged man like myself."

"But, you see, Alec, you're still such a baby really."

"And I might have lost you before we were married!"

He rose impulsively and took her in his arms.

"I wonder why you love me?" he whispered. "And I dare say nobody except myself believes that you do."

"And therefore they all think me a cold-blooded designing hussy?" asked Elise, twinkling.

But to herself she was thinking this was probably the first moment when she could declare sincerely that she loved Alec with the simple passion he had dreaded putting to the proof. There had been affection, admiration, and a touch of ambition in her marriage; but now through the influence of that dead wife and her son there was what could indeed be called love.

John, completely ignorant of the catalysis he had effected in the emotions of other people while remaining unchanged himself, went back to Milbourne with the news of his father's permission to become a second-lieutenant in the First Loamshire Volunteers.

Mr Damson was enchanted. His pupil's resolve seemed to bring the rattle of gun-carriages into the Vicarage drive, the sound of pom-poms into his garden, and the whole South African War into his study. Dr Meade was now never alluded to except as Captain Meade. The advantages of Milbourne for the next sham-fight were elaborately debated. The superiority of the

1st Loamshire Volunteer Battalion clad in scarlet and officered chiefly by country gentlemen over the 2nd Loamshire Volunteer Battalion clad in grey and officered chiefly by local tradesmen was boisterously proclaimed. The First Battalion was more like the Yeomanry or the Militia than the Volunteers.

"The best battalion in the South-east Midland Brigade," declared the Vicar. "I ought to have been a soldier, you know, Ogilvie."

"But the Church would have lost by that, dear," Mrs Damson protested mildly.

"I don't know," said the Vicar. "I might have commanded a battalion now. Why, I might have been a Brigadier. South Africa has given wonderful opportunities to the man who could accept RESPONSIBILITY. And without flattering myself I think I can assert that I should not have flinched from THAT."

"No, indeed, dear," Mrs Damson agreed. "But you would have been a very great loss to Milbourne. A very great loss indeed. And I'm sure even the Dissenters would not deny that."

When John's uniform arrived from the tailor's, the Vicar's excitement rose to fever heat, and if the only articles of the martial equipment he could himself don with comfort or dignity were the haversack and the water-bottle (though he did try to squeeze himself for a minute into the Sam Browne belt), he derived almost as much satisfaction from seeing John put on first his dark blue serge undress, then his scarlet serge tunic with white facings, and finally his silver-laced scarlet broadcloth tunic of ceremony. He did try the effect of the forage-cap, and in it looked like a burglar doing time; but the helmet

balanced on the top of his big head fell off, and the spike caught him a nasty jab on the instep.

John had three drills a week to attend—two for his instruction in the armoury with other recruits in the mysteries of presenting and porting arms and all the rest of it, and one in the drill-hall when with the help of hoarse *sotto voce* prompting from the colour-sergeant and other non-commissioned officers, he managed to tie up the company into intricate formations and untie it again to the satisfaction of Captain Meade and the chesty sergeant-instructor.

One Saturday afternoon the Loam company had a route march, and just when the men were parading outside the drill-hall an urgent call came for Captain Meade which necessitated his driving off into the country and leaving John in command.

All went well through Loam; but on reaching the neighbouring town of Bigham which was really a commercial extension of Loam itself the members of the Loam company proceeded to show their contempt for Bigham and its inhabitants by greeting the young women with pip-pips and the bearded old with raspberries.

"Less noise in front there, those men," called one of the sergeants, looking round anxiously to see what John was going to do about it.

John did nothing, for he hoped that the objectionable noises would stop.

Presently, however, some of the men started falling out and chucking under the chin the girls of Bigham, whose shrill giggles completely destroyed the martial effect of the A or Loam Company of the First Volunteer Battalion of the Loamshire Regiment.

"You'll have to check 'em, sir," murmured Colour-sergeant Abraham Capstick, his big hooked nose glowing red with indignation. In civilian life the Colour-sergeant was a tailor, and his experience of the Volunteers extended over thirty years.

"They're good lads, but you don't want to let 'em have a game wi' you the first time out, as you might say. You'll never have the whip-hand of 'em again."

"Company!" shouted John. "Halt!"

He was surprised by the strength of his own voice.

"Stand at ease! 'Shun!! Shoulder arrrms!!! Quick march!!!!"

The company set out marching at strict attention. John at the head with his sword vertical.

When Bigham was left behind, the men expected to hear the welcome order to march at ease, but they got no nearer to it than sloping arms, and for five miles John kept them marching at attention.

When they reached the turning-point of the march the men were allowed to fall out for ten minutes. John called up the Colour-sergeant.

"Look here, Colour-sergeant, will you tell the other non-commissioned officers to give a quiet hint to the men thatat the first sign of rowdiness from anybody I shall march the company all the way back to Loam at attention."

"Very good, sir," said the Colour-sergeant, saluting.
"Might I say something, sir?"

John nodded.

"I think they've had their little lesson, sir. I think you'll find it quite all right to let 'em march easy on the way back. I think if I was you I wouldn't bother to say nothing to the non-commissioned officers."

"All right, Colour-sergeant. Thanks for the tip."

"And if I might make so bold, sir, we shall be passing the Dog and Duck by Liddon Marsh in about a mile from here. I think if you called a halt and ordered them a half-pint all round it would just about what you might call clinch it very pleasantly."

And so it did. The march home to songs like Dolly Grey, Tommy Atkins, and Just a Little Bit Off the Top, with the Woodbines (five a penny in those days) sparkling in the dusk and the red November moon floating gradually clear of the river mists, was a different matter from the march out.

John reported the results of the route march to Captain Meade and was invited by the genial Mrs Meade to stay on to supper.

"He did a good afternoon's work, Kathleen. The men were a bit difficult at first, but Capstick told me he handled them just right."

"Well, now, wasn't that grand?" Mrs Meade beamed.

It set in to rain after supper; but John riding back to Milbourne noticed neither that he was wet nor tired. He knew the moral satisfaction of Longfellow's blacksmith.

The week after the route march John went up to London, and heard Julius Stern give his chamber concert with Renée Noirtier. One could not believe it was winter when those two children played Mozart.

After the concert John was invited by Mrs Stern to dine in Hampstead. The Noirtiers, *père, mère, et fille*, had been invited too.

It would not have been difficult for the least imaginative person to apprehend that Julius Stern was a prodigy of music, and for such a one Miriam Stern was obviously

the appropriate mother; but the widest experience of the world of art would have left its possessor puzzled to understand how that china doll of a girl could produce from beneath all that ribbon and lace such music, and still more puzzled to understand how that plump middle-aged Frenchman, with one of those full fluffy virgin beards that only Gaul seems able to grow, could have begotten her upon that sallow porcine wife with a front like a switchback railway.

"You know, Emil, when I hear somebody like that kid playing as she played this afternoon, I get an absolute conviction that there must be something beyond this life," John declared.

"I call that very sentimental reasoning," his friend observed scornfully. "If we paid attention to every vague intimation of the *au delà* we should soon be in a pretty hopeless intellectual fog."

"You don't understand," John persisted. "I'm not discussing that kid's ability to make an emotional appeal. It's the incongruity between cause and effect. Look at her parents, and for that matter look at her, especially when she was wolfig those crystallized fruits at dessert. If an orang-outang suddenly walked up on a platform and started playing Mozart, you'd admit that it implied the existence of God, because you couldn't account for it except by a supernatural power working miraculously. Very well then, to my mind a girl like that produced by a pair of human beings like the Noirtiers is equally evidence of a supernatural power working miraculously."

"You exaggerate the significance of purely interpretative art, and even 'interpretative' is too handsome an epithet. I should prefer to call it 'executive'. And why

make unjustifiable deductions from the incongruity between the executant and his material? You wouldn't call Beethoven's ugly face a proof of God's existence. You're suffering from the Greek superstition about the importance of personal beauty."

"You consider personal beauty important," John pointed out.

"Sensuously, but not morally or intellectually," said Emil.

"Well, I'm inclined to think that external beauty was intended to match internal beauty," John argued. "And that one indication of man's fall is the high proportion of ugliness among intellectual men and women, or perhaps not so much positive ugliness as a kind of decayed look."

"I suppose this is the result of dressing up in a uniform," Emil commented severely. "Humanity is now to be justified by its ability to strut."

"No, but I *am* beginning to discover that form is as important in life as in art. The other day I had to impress on my men . . ."

"Your men!" Emil broke in, scoffing.

"Let me finish. To impress on the men I was commanding that although I might seem to them an absurd kid I was as capable of compelling them to maintain a recognizable form as the Colonel himself. I was in an awful funk that they wouldn't obey me; but they did, and the result is that since then I feel far more confident of my own form. I can see myself now in relation to other people much more clearly, and the result is that I'm beginning to get a kind of dim idea at last of a design in the universe."

"But where does Renée Noirtier come into this?"

"Well, she doesn't very much," John admitted, "except that if I could get her into relation to music I should feel I was nearer to a comprehension of music, and I have an instinct that without some comprehension of music one simply cannot hope to live completely, and if one cannot live completely one cannot hope to reach any idea of . . . well, of God."

"What does 'completely' cover in 'living completely'?" the younger boy asked.

"Accepting experience, or at any rate not running away from it, I suppose. It would be dismal to get old and look back—say when one was fifty—at all the turnings one had passed without exploring them."

"It might be worse to look back from the end of one of the turnings," Emil suggested. "I don't agree with you that all experience is valuable. I think that notion is exploded. We ought to be able to take advantage of the experience of the past by now and acquire it intellectually. Civilized human nature has outgrown the necessity for many kinds of direct experience. Take a crude example like the disappearance of duelling. Surely that is a sign man is beginning to realize that a mental conflict cannot be solved by a corporal encounter?"

"The South African War doesn't support your theory."

"Because human opinion in the mass exhibits man in a more primitive state of development. We can only deal with that by educating everybody up to the level of a progressive thinker of to-day."

"Which of course is going to be quite easy," said John sarcastically.

"It will take time, but it will be achieved ultimately. Our business in this generation is to quicken the pace.

Individualists like you engaged in the self-indulgence of purely personal experiment belong to an earlier stage of civilization. I should call it a kind of arrested development."

"I might call your condition premature senility," John retorted.

"You might, but it would leave me quite unmoved, for I should prefer the tranquillity of that condition to your theory that if you rush about enough and strike matches in all the dark corners you'll find God in one of them. Besides, you talk about God, but what do you mean by God, John? You must have some clear notion of what you are going to look for."

"I haven't yet," John admitted. "But I don't see that that puts me in such a much worse position than you who have made up your mind that there is nothing to look for."

"Except that I've avoided a good deal of wasted time," Emil pointed out. "You have no profound belief, and are looking for something in which to believe. I believe in man, and the future of man."

"Then I think you're a good deal more credulous than I am. Anyway, I hope you and I will go on being friends, because I shall look forward to continuing this argument at intervals through our lives."

The day after this talk John went to see Edward Fitzgerald.

"Ah-hah! The Yeoman captain with fiery glare, so a tear and a prayer for the croppy-boy," jeered the Irishman. "Begod, Judge, if I ever fall into your hands and you have me shot at dawn I'll never speak to you again."

"Well, I wanted something to do."

"So you took Victoria's shilling. Come on then around the corner, and we'll have one to celebrate your arrival at man's estate. The pubs have been open for exactly five minutes, and this wintry Sabbath of England demands a drink to warm it."

In the saloon bar of the Pines Hotel, West Kensington, Fitzgerald continued to gibe at his friend's surrender of principles.

"It's no use, Judge, you're a true Scotchman, always ready to kiss Britannia's —— for a pat on the head from the blowsy old hag."

"What rot you talk," said John angrily. "You don't suppose I'm in the Volunteers except to amuse myself, do you? I must do something."

"So he dresses himself up in a red coat and dances about like a monkey on a barrel-organ. You've a damned odd notion of amusement, Judge. And what does the Infant Samuel say about it?"

"Emil Stern? Well, of course he's like you . . ."

"The hell he's like me," broke in Fitzgerald.

"He thinks like you that it's absurd, but for different reasons. Anyway the point is that you both have a definite object in view. Stern believes that the beginning of the new century will lead to tremendous humanitarian progress and he expects to be in the thick of it. You believe that your country can be cut free from England at whose tail she is being dragged unwillingly along in the wrong direction. If there was a feeling in Scotland like there is in Ireland I wouldn't be worrying. I would be in the thick of it. I see no sign of it. So meanwhile I intend to get all the experience I can."

A London Road Car omnibus, dark blue and choco-

late, lumbered out from the stable archway to await by the edge of the pavement below the window of the saloon bar the moment to start upon its journey.

"You wouldn't refuse to drive in that bus," John pointed out, "because it's carrying a little Union Jack in front as a trademark. Well, joining the Volunteers is like driving somewhere in a Road Car bus."

John debated with himself paying a call on the Fenwicks that evening; but he did not go, because he had just heard from Hetty that Connie's engagement with Arthur Dancaster was quite definitely broken off, and he dreaded the slightest suggestion on her part that his own chance was now good again. It was not that Hetty really thought so, but his obvious lack of interest would give her an excuse to point out how right she had been in foreseeing that his life would drift apart from the lives of the household in Gladwyn Road. Moreover, he did not want to feel apologetic with Mr Fenwick about joining the Volunteers. He could not seriously discuss what was beginning to seem more than ever the fatuous sentimentalism of Mr Fenwick's political attitude.

When John returned to Milbourne on Sunday night he found a letter waiting for him from the Laird of Ardvore:

ARDVORE HOUSE,
SUTHERLAND

Thursday Dec. 16th 1900.

*Dear Iain Mac ghille bhuidhe,
I have established that your great-grandmother*

Iseabal NicLeodid or in the barbaric tongue of the Sasunnach Isabel Macleod, who married Padruig Mac Ghille bhuidhe (Patrick Ogilvie, W.S.) in 1810, was the third daughter of the Reverend Alexander Macleod, by his wife Janet MacIver, who was the grandson of Roderick Macleod, tacksman of Sandwater. Now, Roderick Macleod of Sandwater was one of the five Macleods who accompanied my great-grandfather in the Prince's year, and his mother was a daughter of Torquil Macleod, fifth of Ardvore. That makes us cousins, and not such distant cousins either by our Highland notions. So that renders it more than ever imperative you should come up and visit the land of your forefathers. I am an old man and have begun to dislike postponement. So come, if you can and will, in time to join us in the last week of this year and bring in the new century with us. It's a long journey. Lairg is the nearest station, and then there's another forty miles by coach. If you left Euston on the evening of Thursday, December 27, you would be with us by Saturday for certain. It won't do to get stuck midway on the Sabbath, and New Year's Day is on a Tuesday. Wrap yourself up well, for the drive across Sutherland can be perishing, but you'll be agreeably surprised by the mildness of the weather on the west coast, with any ordinary luck that is.

I shall look forward to hearing you are coming, my dear cousin, and look forward also to cementing with friendship the agreeable acquaintanceship we struck up in the Havre packet.

Yours most truly,

Torquil Macleod of Ardvore

John's father made no difficulty about his accepting this invitation, although he was inclined to be a little scornful of Ardvore's relationship.

"I can't work it out, and God forbid that I should try; but it would astonish me to find that we are as near as fortieth cousins, which is as good as to say that we are no relations at all."

"Don't be so discouraging, Alec," said his wife. "I applaud this pilgrimage to the North."

"I've always left that kind of thing to my brother Duncan, but I've noticed that in spite of his interest in our origins he takes good care to spend all his own holidays in the fattest part of Hampshire. He actually took up my mother's family tree once, but soon lost it in an impenetrable forest of the Vosges."

"Never mind. The effort was praiseworthy," Elise decided.

"Perhaps, perhaps. But I spend so much of my time with documents of one kind and another that I am impatient of anything which even faintly suggests the law."

It was in the small hours of a raw and misty December night that John crossed the border for the first time. He would not have been aware of the very moment if it had not been the preoccupation of a fellow-traveller in a condition of maudlin patriotism from the time the train left Euston.

"I like fine working down in London," this individual had proclaimed as he took a swig at the bottle of whisky with which he had fortified himself for the journey. "Och aye, I like it fine. Well, I'm a Campbell myself. Now you'll hear them miscalling the Campbells. . . . Yes, I'm a Campbell myself. George Campbell, aye, that's me."

John looked politely at this representative of the great clan which in his belief had wrought more spiritual damage on Scotland than any other. He saw a sandy-haired raw-boned man of about thirty with small light-blue pig's-eyes, a loose greedy mouth, and snoutish nose.

"George Campbell," his companion repeated. "George Campbell of Ashford and Jones. You'll have heard of Ashford and Jones?"

John had to admit ignorance.

"You've no' heard of Ashford and Jones? Gosh, but it's remarkable the ignorance anybody meets with in a railway-carriage. Now, you can take it from me, Mr. . . ." the proud member of the firm of Ashford and Jones paused for enlightenment.

"Ogilvie."

"And you a Scot yourself! Man, it's fearful. Well, I'm telling you. Ashford and Jones make twenty-five per cent, och, I'll go further, I'll say that Ashford and Jones make twenty-seven or even twenty-eight per cent of all the lavatory basins and lavatory pans and up-to-date sanitary fittings used in Great Britain. And I'm telling you this. They're out to capture the biggest part of the foreign markets. And they'll do it. And do you know for why they'll do it? Because the whole of the staff is Scottish. That's the secret of success. Aye, I like fine working down in London, but the English are awfu' stupid. And they're awfu' lazy too. Aye, you'll hear folks miscalling the Campbells, but I'm proud to be a Scot and I'm proud to be a Campbell. And it's just jealousy. I'm telling you. Every Englishman knows that a Scotsman is a better man than he is—och, he won't admit it, but he knows it all the same. And every Scotsman knows that the best Scot of

them all is a Campbell. Well, well," he mauldered, raising the bottle to his lips. "Here's tae us, wha's like us? I'm sorry you'll not take another dram with me. Aye, it's disheartening to travel home with a brother Scot and find he'll no' drink a wee dram with you. But I'm not going to make it a personal matter. I'm a Highlandman. My grandfather lived in Inveraray. Aye, he did that, and then he came down to Glasgow. But still the heart is Highland. That's right, isn't it? And do you think because I've been working for twelve years on the clerical side of Ashford and Jones I've forgotten I'm a Scot? I have not. I'll tell you a wee bit of a business secret, Mr Ogilvie. I wouldna be surprised to be offered the post of assistant-manager to the new branch of the firm Ashford and Jones are opening in Cape Town. I'm a Liberal myself; but that disna say I'm to refuse to take the chance of business expansion in South Africa when this unjust war is over. If Joe Chamberlain stood for a Scottish constituency I'd vote against him. I'd vote against him wherever he stood. But I'm no' such a fool as to sacrifice my career because I dinna believe this war is a just war. Not at all. I take a more long-sighted view than that. We're no' like the English. We Scots have a grand sense of responsibility. We don't believe in throwing away everything for just an idea."

"I haven't noticed that the English will fling away much for an idea," said John.

"What? Have you no' seen the way an Englishman will tog himself out with new clothes? Man, they'll throw away all they've got for the idea of being dressed better than other people. And if I was to throw away my career because I thought we had no right to fight against

a couple of wee God-fearing countries like the Transvaal and the Orange Free State, it would be just self-indulgence. No man can throw away his career."

"Wallace threw away a good deal for an idea," John pointed out.

"Wallace? Wallace? Och, you mean William Wallace. Aye, he was a great patriot. But there's a lot of water flowed along Clydeside since Wallace. Here, but you're no' suggesting that I'm no' a guid Scot? For why would I be spending my money to travel home for Hogmanay if I were no' a guid Scot? Aye, I know they give cheap return tickets for a week, but mighty me, they're no' so cheap as all that. And I'm telling you. When we cross the border to-night I'm counting to put my head out of the carriage window and give a cheer. And there'll be others doing the same right along the train. And I'll tell you this. If you're asleep I'll wake you up, because the Scot who sleeps when he's crossing the border to home is no' a true Scotsman at a'. See here, you were talking to me aboot Wallace, were you not so? Aye, weel, I'm telling you that the chap who disna put his head oot o' the carriage window and give a cheer for bonny Scotland and hame has no right to blether about Wallace. Whaur would we be to-day without Wallace? I'm telling you. We wouldna be ruling the British Empire."

"Are we ruling the British Empire?"

"Are we ruling the British Empire? Gladstone! Was he no' a Scot? Rosebery! Is he no' a Scot? Balfour! Is he no' a Scot? Man, you're fair daft to be blethering the way you're blethering the noo."

"So I suppose you wouldn't be in favour of Home Rule?"

"I'm a Liberal," Mr Campbell admitted a little doubtfully. "And I suppose as a Liberal I'm compelled by my principles to recognize the right of a people even like the Irish to look after their own affairs, but the Bill will have to be cannily drafted, for there's many of us are thinking that Home Rule means Rome Rule."

"I wasn't meaning Home Rule for Ireland," said John somewhat despondently. "I was meaning Home Rule for Scotland."

"Home Rule for Scotland?" Mr. Campbell gasped. "Home Rule for Scotland, when it's the Scots who rule the British Empire? Man, you're crazy! Why, I might have said I was fou', to hear you blethering about Home Rule for Scotland, for I've taken a few drams the night what with thinking of going home and seeing my old father and my old mother. Home Rule for Scotland? Losh, if that's not the best thing I've heard in months. And where would Ashford and Jones be if there were Home Rule in Scotland? And where would the Scottish employees of Ashford and Jones be?"

"Oh well, it's not worth arguing about," said John. "You've already made it plain you don't believe in ideas."

"Not in ideas like that," Mr Campbell agreed. "Not even for the sake of argument, though I like fine a good argument."

John buried himself in a book. Mr Campbell took another pensive swig at the bottle and then produced from the pocket of his overcoat the current issue of the *Glasgow Herald*.

"The best newspaper in the world," he proclaimed defiantly, tapping the unfolded sheets. "And you won't find

much about Home Rule for Scotland here. The best newspaper in the world, and coming from a Liberal like myself, that's what I call a compliment."

John nodded agreement with a yawn.

"If you'll take my advice, and, I'm telling you, no man gives better advice than what I give, you'll put your feet up and get a bit of a snooze. I'll wake you when we cross the border. I'm no' going to sleep myself. I'm just going to lie here and think aboot bonny Scotland."

Thus it was that in the small hours of a raw and misty December night John was roused from sleep to put his head out of the window, and that as the train rushed through the murk he was urged to wave his cap and give a cheer. All he succeeded in doing was to get a bit of coal grit lodged in his eye, which gave him an excuse for not having obeyed Mr Campbell's patriotic exhortations.

John's companion left the train at Larbert. The figure in the blurred illumination of a gas-lamp waiting for the train which would take him home did not look like a ruler of the Empire. Yet with or without whisky he believed that he was equivalently a proconsul.

It was not until the train reached Killiecrankie in the lagging greyness of the winter dawn that John began to recover from the dispiriting effect of Mr George Campbell upon his dream of national aspirations, for under the stimulus of this visit that dream had recurred. Thence onward to Inverness the journey became a somnambulist's progress through the past, when the very figures upon the platforms of stations were ghosts in that snow-threatened northern air. Shepherds, porters, women, rosy-cheeked children were no more substantial than their own frosted breath. Everything had the strangeness of a dream-world,

and at the same time a dream-world's impotency to surprise. Even to-day, except perhaps in the month of August, the station of Inverness seems alive only to the traveller's departure, symbolic of the disembowelled country of which it is reputed to be the capital. John arriving there at the shutting in of the last December of that ruinous nineteenth century felt the loneliness not of the stranger but of the invisible returning dead.

"Yes, I know just what you mean," his host agreed when after many hours of travel by train and coach John was sitting with the Laird of Ardvore in the parlour of the inn at Lochinver. "I think it's probably an assumption on the part of the porters that anybody arriving at Inverness in mid-winter must belong to the place and is therefore in no need of help or information. But here you are, and the blood of Iseabal Nic Leodid should be coursing at fever heat through your veins."

"I think it is," John admitted, remembering the first sight of Suilven standing up in the west like a huge grape-dark hand, miles away above the desolate moorland. What were the mountains of Switzerland compared with that shape of stone solitary as a mammoth upon the edge of the landscape? Huddled parvenus. His first sight of the Laird of Ardvore standing by the inn-door when the coach pulled up was not less memorable. That beaky-nosed bearded old man in faded kilt was autochthonous like Ben More Assynt itself.

"Well now, if you've had all the tea you want, we'll ring for the trap to be brought round. Another ten miles still to go, and dinner is at seven. A pity it's dark. The road we shall take gives you a grand view of some of our Sutherland bens. Still, all in all, I'm glad you are seeing

much about Home Rule for Scotland here. The best newspaper in the world, and coming from a Liberal like myself, that's what I call a compliment."

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"Yes, I know just what you mean," his host agreed when after many hours of travel by train and coach John was sitting with the Laird of Ardvore in the parlour of the inn at Lochinver. "I think it's probably an assumption on the part of the porters that anybody arriving at Inverness in mid-winter must belong to the place and is therefore in no need of help or information. But here you are, and the blood of Iseabal Nic Leòid should be coursing at fever heat through your veins."

"I think it is," John admitted, remembering the first sight of Suilven standing up in the west like a huge grape-dark hand, miles away above the desolate moorland. What were the mountains of Switzerland compared with that shape of stone solitary as a mammoth upon the edge of the landscape? Huddled parvenus. His first sight of the Laird of Ardvore standing by the inn-door when the coach pulled up was not less memorable. That beaky-nosed bearded old man in faded kilt was autochthonous like Ben More Assynt itself.

"Well now, if you've had all the tea you want, we'll ring for the trap to be brought round. Another ten miles still to go, and dinner is at seven. A pity it's dark. The road we shall take gives you a grand view of some of our Sutherland bens. Still, all in all, I'm glad you are seeing

much about Home Rule for Scotland here. The best newspaper in the world, and coming from a Liberal like myself, that's what I call a compliment."

John nodded agreement with a yawn.

"If you'll take my advice, and, I'm telling you, no man gives better advice than what I give, you'll put your feet up and get a bit of a snooze. I'll wake you when we cross the border. I'm no' going to sleep myself. I'm just going to lie here and think aboot bonny Scotland."

Thus it was that in the small hours of a raw and misty December night John was roused from sleep to put his head out of the window, and that as the train rushed through the murk he was urged to wave his cap and give a cheer. All he succeeded in doing was to get a bit of coal grit lodged in his eye, which gave him an excuse for not having obeyed Mr Campbell's patriotic exhortations.

John's companion left the train at Larbert. The figure in the blurred illumination of a gas-lamp waiting for the train which would take him home did not look like a ruler of the Empire. Yet with or without whisky he believed that he was equivalently a proconsul.

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the land of your forefathers first in mid-winter. You'll come nearer to the heart of it so."

The way was narrow, and by the yellow light of the candles in the carriage-lamps the crags on either side loomed and beetled fantastically. From time to time the noise of running water drowned the crackle of the wheels on the rough road; but when the trap had passed beyond it, the silence of the evening had the power and profundity of midnight.

After about five miles of driving John heard a pervading murmur ahead.

"Is that the sea?"

"That's the sea. We shall be crossing the *tràigh* presently. Steady, lass!"

The mare had slipped for a moment on the steep zig-zag of the descent. A few minutes later the trap was running level. The air was salt, and round the next corner the mare's hooves and the wheels of the trap were suddenly deadened by sand which had drifted across the road. In the darkness seaward a long line of breakers glimmered. The pervading murmur was now a roar.

"Nasty place on a stormy night," the laird remarked. "But the weather smells sweet enough at present. Only another five miles to go. Ardvore begins with that township at the bottom of the brae."

Scattered lights showed ahead, and the smell of the sea was mingled with peat reek.

"But, by Jove, what am I thinking of?" the laird exclaimed. "This is Sandwater, the home of your Macleod forebears."

From the doorway of a minute thatched house by the side of the road where it ran clear of the drifted sand to

wind up the brae an old woman in a mutch came out to peer at the sound of wheels.

Ardvore cried a good evening to her in Gaelic, which she acknowledged with a bobbing curtsey and some voluble observations on the weather.

"Say 'oidche mhath leibh,'" his host prompted him.

John felt as much astonished as he used to feel as a child at a penny's working some complicated drama in an automatic machine when the old lady recognized his salute and returned it with enthusiasm.

"What did I say to her?" he asked, as the trap passed out of earshot.

"You merely said good-night. Poor old soul, she lives all alone in that house. Her husband Roderick Macleod was drowned about fifteen years back, and all her children are in Canada. She won't leave Sandwater to join any of them. She told me only last week that there was too long a journey before her that she *must* take soon, and I sympathize over that prospect."

"I wonder if she's a cousin of mine?" said John.

"Bound to be, I should say," Ardvore replied. "She was a daughter of old Hector Macleod, a grand old Assynt character who died in 1891 at the age of a hundred and two. And yes, I'm nearly sure he was one of Roderick of Sandwater's descendants. We'll walk over and have a talk to the old lady about it one day. Oh, there's no doubt about it, you're among your own people here."

John felt his body glow with a warmth of life beyond anything he had hitherto felt. The very boulders of this land, the most ancient rocks in Europe, seemed to stir beside the road in recognition of him as the trap drove past.

It was about half-past six when they turned aside from the road between two rough pillars of granite and continued along a drive through a wood of hoary and stunted sycamores to Ardvore, a long low stone house with stepped gables at either end and nine dormers in the roof.

The centre of Ardvore House was taken up with a large hall which was lighted from above by dormers on either side. A great fire of peats was burning on the hooded hearth. The walls were hung with Lochaber axes, clay-mores, old muzzle-loaders and other arms; but there were several large paintings of typical Highland scenes and Highland gentlemen, with the usual heads of stags and here and there a glass case with stuffed specimens of wild cat or pine-marten or white-tailed eagle and the rest of a vanishing fauna. Tartan was everywhere, most of it the black and yellow of the Macleods of Lewis, a nineteenth-century invention.

The three daughters of Ardvore rose from the lamp-light by which they were reading to welcome the guest. Miss Una, the eldest, was a woman of about fifty, Miss Maeve, the second, might have been forty-five, and Miss Bride, the youngest, some ten years younger. Although each was the daughter of a different mother and that mother in every case an Englishwoman, the three Misses Macleod strongly resembled one another thanks to the powerful stamp of the laird's features. All three had prominent beaky noses, and their complexions were all of the same weatherbeaten rose scrabbled with little purple veins like a chaffinch's egg. All three had the large teeth which continental caricaturists observe in the English-woman and which are supposed to be a Norman heritage. All three had the peculiar dowdiness of well-bred English-

women, and all three had attendant dogs, Miss Una a Skye terrier, Miss Maeve a West Highland, and Miss Bride a Dandie Dinmont. No three women could have more completely belied their Gaelic names. They were proud of being the Misses Macleod of Ardvore, but chiefly because it lent them a kind of mysterious distinction in Southern society, for which they felt they paid a considerable price by their protracted exile in the Northwest with their father, that exile which was faintly lightened in season for Miss Una by catching salmon and sea-trout and shooting grouse, for Miss Maeve by shooting hinds and catching brown trout, and for Miss Bride by the arrival of the latest books from Mudie's library. Miss Una had been engaged to a young Northumberland squire who had died of a fever nearly thirty years before. Miss Maeve had been engaged to an officer in the Gordons who had been killed at Majuba. Miss Bride had reached thirty-five with no more romance than Mudie's could supply for her.

Torquil Macleod, the last of Ardvore, wished now in his seventy-ninth year that instead of bothering to marry a succession of heiresses he had taken to wife a woman of Assynt, one of his own blood if poor and humble. Thus might he like earlier lairds have raised up a family ample enough to ensure a successor for the windswept rocky acres and austere house of Ardvore. Such a family would have had a hard upbringing, but what of that? This wild land of Assynt was never a nursery for softlings. Their characters should be furrowed like the face of the Cuineag, their bodies hardy as the dark contorted pines on the islets of the loch below. The knowledge that the three daughters who survived him would live out their barren

lives in material comfort with the money he had received from three alien wives was nothing to set against the possession of a son and a grandson, yes, and to them might have been added even a great-grandson who in spite of poverty would cling somehow to this land as the crotail to the rocks. He should have married Mary Nicolson—Maire Nic Neacail, oldest name of them all in Assynt. Where was Mary Nicolson now? She had sailed away to Canada after the potato famine in the hungry 'forties. Not a word of her for more than half a century. Yet he would see her dark eyes glittering when the primroses bloomed among the mossy roots of the alders of the burn beside which he and she had kissed the April days away and watched the yellow evening-star dog the young moon down into the ocean beyond the long dim line of the Lewis coast. And then back at Cambridge again it had seemed absurd to contemplate marriage with a crofter's daughter. Down at Cambridge the world had seemed too large an affair to be kicked away as contemptuously as from the solitude of Assynt it could be kicked like a shinty ball. In that curriple behind a pair of spanking greys on the road to Newmarket it would have been as suitable for Torquil Macleod, younger of Ardvore, to wed one of those cream-and-strawberry maids in bird's-eye sunbonnets who waved from the June meadows to the swiftly moving vehicle as to wed Mary Nicolson. Yes, the world had seemed too large an affair then. It seemed small enough now, on the edge of eternity.

Maire Nic Neacail!

At long intervals through the years which had rolled away since last they met she had visited him in dreams. Brief, brief, those visits. Held in her arms for as long as

it takes a golden leaf to float spinning to the ground from the autumnal birch. Brief as a note of music, but long enough to see again her dark eyes and rowan-red cheeks, long enough to feel again upon his lips those flower-soft lips secure in dreams against time's withering. She had not visited him thus more than once in every decade, and she was always gone before he could beg her to speak, closing his mouth for an instant with her mouth as she faded from his arms. Were such visions no more than a trick of the brain? That question would soon receive its answer, even were it to be oblivion which should make a speechless response.

It was in this mood of unfulfilment that the last laird of Ardvore sat talking with his young guest on the afternoon of the last day of the nineteenth century.

They had been down to Sandwater earlier and had called upon old Mrs Roderick Macleod in her little house on the braeside above the *tràigh* which on that still grey morning was lapped by a Minch that seemed without motion. On the thatch, which was covered with a net kept in place by stones suspended from it all round the house, a company of shimmering starlings chattered. It was not a black house, for there was a hearth at one end from which a square wooden chimney let out the peat-reek; but that must have been a comparatively recent improvement, to judge by the ebony of the wooden frame on which the thatch rested. The floor was the bare ground sanded over. In one corner of the room was what looked

like a cupboard, but which contained the old lady's box-bed. The sills of the tiny windows set in the massive walls were filled with geraniums which interposed their greenery between the view of the sea and the sand with a kind of assurance of terrestrial security. The feature of Mrs Macleod's single room was the dresser which was crowded with plates and cups and teapots of china and lustre, the gilding and crude colours and neatness of the arrangement giving the little room the gaiety of a fair. For pictures there were old almanacs enhanced above the columns of figures by sentimental Highland scenes in a Trossach landscape, most of which still carried the tattered remnants of the bygone Decembers when their utility was outlived, if not for Mrs Macleod their beauty. On this last day of the last December of a century they were an appropriate reminder of mortality. When the laird and his guest had called, the table in the middle of the room had been occupied with a huge open Bible, the old lady's spectacles beside it. Presumably she had been looking at its damp-spotted steel engravings of palms and flocks and patriarchs, of Jehovah's genial miracles on behalf of His favourites, and of the slaughtered heaps of His pet aversions. She could not read, and if she had been able to read would have been none the wiser, since the Bible was printed in English, of which she had not a word.

Like that of most people who have had the fortune to escape the alphabet Mrs Macleod's memory was prodigious, and from a torrent of Ruairidhs and Aileans and Eachanns and Alasdairs emerged the clear past of John's common ancestry with her own.

"She's telling you how proud she is to be related to a duine uasal like yourself," Ardvore had explained to his

young guest, who was looking a little bewildered by Mrs Macleod's voluble enthusiasm. To himself the laird had thought wistfully how proud he would have been to call John his grandson and how tranquilly he would face that last journey across the moorland upon the shoulders of his people, the pipes lamenting Macleod of Ardvore to the mountains and the sea, if he could leave behind him such another Macleod of Ardvore.

As for John he had been wishing he had the Gaelic to convey to this ancient cousin his delight at her recognition of himself.

"So the land of your forefathers speaks to you," the laird said when he and John were sitting by the window of the library at Ardvore, and watching the crimson of the sunset gash the grey monotone of the wintry sky.

"It always has spoken," John replied.

"Now wouldn't it be fine if when you left the University you came and settled up here? You could soon acquire the Gaelic. I don't know what my daughters will decide to do with Ardvore when I am gone. They might sell it. And you might be able to buy it."

"Yes, it would be fine to settle up here," John agreed. "But I wouldn't want to do that unless there was an object. I haven't made up my mind yet quite what I want to do. I expect it will end in my trying to write. But I wouldn't want to find myself fixed here and then discover I couldn't write well enough to justify what would be a withdrawal unless . . ." he looked quickly at his host who was gazing out over the Minch spread below the blunt headland of brownish tussocky grass on which Ardvore House stood . . . "unless I could justify myself here in other ways."

"You could feel you were helping to maintain a traditional habit of life and way of thought which will not be too easily maintained in the century beginning to-morrow."

"Not in the present status of Scotland," John agreed. "But if the country were independent . . ."

"Independent?" Ardvore interposed. "Independent in what way?"

"Independent of England. Separated from England as completely as Denmark or Holland are separated from Germany."

"What on earth would be the sense of that?"

"To maintain that traditional habit of life and way of thought of which you were speaking."

"You won't do that by dragging politics into it. In any case, it is not England we have to bother about up here. It is the south of Scotland. We're a hundred times better off being ruled by England than we should be if we were ruled by a pack of Edinburgh lawyers. Besides, the country is a mass of radicalism, and any kind of Home Rule would mean we should be at the mercy of radicals. No, no, let well alone. As for complete separation, why, that's a ludicrous notion. We could not exist materially without England."

"That remains to be tried," John argued. "But we could certainly exist spiritually."

"Spiritual existence is not enough for an empty belly. It is the belly which always rules in the long run. Remember Æsop's fable. And then there's the problem of the Crown. The separation would inevitably be incomplete so long as you had the two countries under one Queen. But we don't want it . . . we don't want it. Nothing could be worse for the Highlands than separa-

tion from England. We have much more in common with the English than with the Lowlander. Remember that fellow who travelled up with you the other night. There's the effect of Glasgow on good Highland blood. The only chance for a fellow like that is the chance that England and the Empire offer him. Look at yourself. You've been out of your own country for a couple of generations. You have been educated at an English public school. Has that prevented you from responding to the spirit of your own country? I myself was educated at Harrow and Trinity. It has not made me less of a good Highlander. Not a whit less," Ardvore repeated a little irritably, for he was inclined to recede into the mood of unfulfilment which had been lying so heavily upon him of late.

John wished he had the courage to make the argument vital by asking his host how he could reconcile his northern pride with such obsequiousness toward the land from whom he had chosen his three wives; but such a question would be merely impudent. He tried to ask it another way round.

"But don't you think it's rather humiliating for so many Highland lairds to depend for their existence on letting their land to rich Englishmen as playgrounds?"

"What else would they do with it?" Ardvore rapped out.

"They could go down fighting like old Mrs Roderick Macleod. I could not come up here and watch people meekly taking the line of least resistance without trying to do something."

"It would be doing the wrong thing if you dragged politics into it."

"Then I couldn't come here and dream away my life," John declared. "If I am wrong I shall find that out in the world. It's good of you to listen so patiently to my wild ideas, I shall always remember that it was you who first gave me the chance to see how they sounded in Assynt."

"Well, I'd certainly rather hear your ideas than these radical notions that young men seem to affect nowadays. But don't bring politics of any kind up here. What we have to do is to preserve our old Gaelic culture, keep the language alive, the music and everything like that, encourage the homespun . . . but the moment you bring politics into it, this kind of thing is at the mercy of faction. You need look no farther than Ireland for an example. The whole culture is being sacrificed to a set of scoundrelly arrivistes like the Nationalist Members. Whereas look at our Highland Members. They don't fling themselves about in the House like a herd of ill-bred schoolchildren. They know that the secret of getting things done is judicious lobbying."

"By being obsequious to their masters in fact," John suggested.

"By good manners, which is by no means the same thing," said Ardvore sharply.

"I don't want you to think I am arguing with you," John replied, "because I'm not equipped to argue with you. Still, if all that could be done is being done, why are you so pessimistic about the future of the Highlands?"

"I dread the spirit of the age."

"And how will you fight that?"

"It is too late for me to fight anything now, but if you

were my grandson I should beg you to stay here among your own people and by the example of your personal life prove to the younger generation that most of their ideas about progress are an illusion. I'd go farther. I'd urge you to take a wife from your own people, and bring up a large family in the traditions of our race."

"I would only do that," said John, "if I believed that the traditions of our race could be demonstrated to the rest of the world."

"They have been demonstrated in the creation of our Empire."

"I wonder if the Empire means anything now. In fact I wonder if it ever has meant anything more than a romantic disguise for shopkeeping on a large scale."

"I'm afraid you're just as much poisoned by all this radicalism as the rest of the younger generation," said the laird severely.

"Now, I don't think I'm the least bit of a radical. In some ways I wish I were. It's rather unsatisfactory to be a revolutionary whose notion of revolution is putting back the clock. That's what a friend of mine once told me was all there was in me of revolution. I think a lot of people of my age are feeling the reaction of the Transvaal War already. We feel that this patriotic emotion is just as hypocritical as most of the other emotions produced by this rotten century. And there again we're suffering from reaction. We've been offered the fag-end of Victorianism and we think that fag-end ought to have been thrown away long ago. If the Queen's reign had been wound up just after her first Jubilee it might have made a difference. As it is we've been educated in the same way as our fathers and grandfathers to inherit a world out of which

they've sucked all the juice. You talked just now of my marrying a girl up here and settling down with her in Assynt. Can't you see that this silly English public-school education prevents my doing that because it has saturated me with prejudices against which I am powerless?"

"I'll tell you now, Iain, that I would to God I had married a girl out of my own class."

"Yes, but you're sixty years older than I am, and though I'm willing to accept your experience I wasn't given the advantage of that experience when I was being moulded by school, so that I'm pretty well where you yourself were sixty years ago. Would you at that date have married a girl who was not of your own class?"

It was then that the old man told John the tale of Mary Nicolson.

"Well, if I meet a Mary Nicolson," John promised when the laird was finished, "I'll remember what you have told me; but I may never meet her."

The lamps were brought in, and the heavy tartan curtains drawn across the window-panes.

John felt a sudden closing in of convention.

"I'm afraid I've been talking rather too much," he said.

"I encouraged you to talk."

"Yes, but it must be an awful bore for a man of your experience to listen to somebody like me holding forth. I wish you'd told me to shut up."

John felt his ears growing longer and suspected himself of assishness. By lamplight he could not imagine how he had allowed himself to forget his manners.

"My dear Iain, you need not reproach yourself. Should

I have told you that story I told you about myself if I had found your speechifying intolerable?"

"It's good of you to say so," John mumbled. Nevertheless, he still felt he had made an ass of himself. He had in fact reverted to normal youth with the lighting up of the room.

Ardvore had sent out invitations for a ceilidh in order to bring in the new century with more solemnity than usual. There was singing and there was piping, there were reels and schottisches, and a tale or two by the old people. There was also plenty of whisky.

The first-footer was a little dark hunchback called Norman MacIver, who was the tailor of Melvaig, a small crofting township between Ardvore and Sandwater. When he entered with the greetings the laird frowned.

"I don't know that I should have chosen Tormaid Sheumais to first-foot me," he murmured to John. "The biggest radical in Sutherland. However, there it is," and with this he drained the dram of acknowledgment. "I suppose he came for luck, and I should be grateful."

The three Misses Macleod retired soon after midnight, but the ceilidh was prolonged in the rooms downstairs.

"I want to make the most of the twentieth century," the old laird assured everybody.

It was about one o'clock when John after what he felt was a most inadequate performance by himself of *The Flowers of Edinburgh* retreated from the more exacting intricacy of *The Eight Men of Moidart* to one of the rooms where dancing was not going on. Here he sat down in an armchair to gather fresh energy and dancing confidence and listen to the pipes and thudding feet farther along the house. He had not been sitting down for more

than a few minutes when the hunchbacked tailor entered the room.

"Hullo, are you not dancing?" he was asked.

"I was having a rest."

"And are you not drinking? Wait you a moment, and I shall bring you a dram."

John did not really want any whisky, but he did not like to reject Norman MacIver's good offices.

"I say, this is a whacking big dram you've brought me," he protested when the tailor returned with a tumbler half full of whisky.

"Och, no. It's no more than a suspicion," said the tailor. "Drink it down, man. It'll do you no harm at all. I have had a few arguments with Ardvore, but I never had an argument with him about his whisky. Yes, yes, his whisky is very good. It roars as gently as a sucking-dove. Now, don't be looking surprised because I gave you a quotation from Shakespeare. I have had plenty opportunities to educate myself. Och, yes, and no opportunity at all to do anything with my education. Well, and how are you enjoying yourself among us wild savages?"

"Tremendously. My great-grandmother came from Sandwater."

"There you are now! And wasn't she the clever crayture to get away from it? Yes, I was hearing from Mistress Macleod, the wife of Ruairidh Ailein, that she and you were relations. Och, well, I dare say you were a bit taken aback to find you had such savage relations?"

"Not at all taken aback."

"Were you not now? Well, well," the little hunchback gave a quick glance over his shoulder. "I would not say that Ardvore . . ." He stopped. "He's not looking

so young as last year. Aye, and he's the last of them. Aye, aye, the very last of the Macleods of Ardvore. Och, well, he has done what he could by his own lights, but the lights were not too bright. Yes, yes, he's a great patriot. Yes, he persuaded ten young men from the townships of Ardvore to join Lovat's Scouts. He did that. Paid their fares to Inverness himself and made such a speech that they were expecting to see the Boers before they reached Bonar Bridge. Still, that was maintaining the tradition of our grand Highland life. Suas leis a' Ghaidlig! Up with the Gaelic! England has had to rely on our Highlanders before, boys. Yes, by God, she had," the little hunchback spat out bitterly. "In Canada and India and Spain. But not fifteen years ago the Royal Scots were landed at Stornoway to keep the Lewismen from running the deer off the forests, and the Marines were in Skye to keep the bloodthirsty peasants from their own land. We want men for the army. We want men for the navy. We want men to sweat for a bowl of meal a day to drag tons of tangle up the beach and burn it into kelp for the lairds to sell at thirty pounds a ton. Stop the villains from daring to talk about emigration. And a few years later . . . a few years later! We don't want men for the army or the navy. The glorious British Empire is at peace. We don't want any more kelp. The price is down to five pounds a ton, and these lazy West Highlanders and Islanders won't work. Let the —s emigrate. Make the —s emigrate. Sheep are more valuable than such a lot of lazy nuisances. What? Is the price of wool down, and are these impudent colonies having the audacity to spoil the market for our wool? Put off the sheep, the way the cattle and the men went

before them. There's only one way I can send my sons to Oxford and Cambridge and that is by letting my shooting to Lord Tomnoddy, dear. Put off the sheep, and put on the deer. They're making an awfully awful lot of money down in England, dear. And I do think it is so awfully jolly for these rich fellows to come up here to our beautiful Highlands and have a little sport. Of course, dear, they're awfully common. Their grandfathers were shopkeepers when our grandfathers were Highland chieftains, but we must move with the times. Money is king nowadays, and these rich fellows will learn in time how to be chieftains themselves. We will teach them to maintain our grand Highland traditions. And the boys can get jobs as gillies. And there will be plenty money for keepers and water-bailiffs."

"But Ardvore wasn't like that," John interrupted.

"No, Ardvore wasn't like that, because Ardvore's land was not a good sporting property. Och, I'm not saying anything against Ardvore beyond this. He encourages the others. He is sorry things are as they are, but at heart he is a landed proprietor, and nobody yet has discovered how to convince a landed proprietor that his tenants are not his servants. And nobody has discovered how to convince a crofter that he can do anything more for himself than vote for the Liberal candidate at an election."

"What is your remedy for the present state of the Highlands?" John asked.

"My remedy would be to join Ireland."

"To join Ireland?" John gasped.

"Aye. Did you ever hear Michael Davitt?"

"I've heard of him."

"Well, I never heard him myself, but a few years ago there was a young Irish chap round here who had met Davitt, and he told me it was Davitt's idea to stir up the Islands and the West Highlands to throw in with Ireland."

John would have given much for a magic carpet to fly down and fetch Edward Fitzgerald to hear this shining revelation.

"This young Irish chap said that Ireland must be free soon, and that Davitt's dream was to unite Gaeldom. Och, it was a great dream. You see his idea was that Belfast was the natural capital of the Islands, and that Glasgow was a piece of artificiality."

"I should have thought that Belfast was equally artificial. It depends on England in the same way that Glasgow does."

"Yes, but with a free Ireland that link with England would be broken. Yes, yes, man, it's undoubtedly a great dream."

"And you'd break Scotland into two?"

"Why not? Ireland was broken into two by the Ulster plantings. If the Lowlands and the East think their future lies with England, that's not to say the Islands and the West must agree with them. Och, it's time we came down to the fundamentals of the business. What has made the success of Britain? To my thinking it has been the mixture of Celtic imagination with Sasunnach solidity. So far so good. But does the Sasunnach appreciate that? Not at all. He supposes that he is a philanthropist so far as the poor Irish and Gaels and Welsh are concerned. In his heart he would be glad to see the whole of them over the ocean. Well, we have mixed our

blood with his. We have made him something better than a German. But with it all he is still much nearer to the Germans than he is to us and to my way of thinking it is time to cut loose if we are to survive. Otherwise we will be sacrificed entirely to commerce and industry. The time cannot be far away now when the choice shall have to be made, between the people crowding together into cities faster and faster and the people who stay in the country. Which is to be sacrificed to the other? The history of England tells us what the answer will be. The West Highlands and Islands cannot be economically independent. Therefore they must choose whether they shall unite with Ireland or with England or with the rest of Scotland."

"But you talk as if Ireland were an independent nation."

"Ireland shall be independent," said the hunchbacked tailor confidently.

John shook his head. Then remembering his friend Fitzgerald he shook it less positively. If there were enough Fitzgeralds in Ireland, Norman MacIver might be prophesying truly.

"I have a friend in London who believes that, and he's the kind of chap who would die to prove himself right."

"I'd like well to meet him," said the tailor. "I would do the same myself if the chance came. Life must be given for life to be gained." He drained his glass of whisky. "What a century is before us! Yet there is one beautiful piece of consolation. The mess man is making of himself proves that there must be a God. And the biggest mess of all is being made by the ministers with their God just about twenty-thousand times as unreasonable as themselves. Ochone, it was a bad thing for the

Gael when we took up with the religion of the Sasunnach. A woeful, woeful day! Have you ever thought why the ministers dislike whisky? I'll tell you, man. It's because they fear the truth that comes with whisky. What a grand and glorious thing it would be if every Gael could be as drunk as I am at this moment. *Magna est veritas!* If the country could be as drunk as I am . . . gabhaidh sinn an rathad mòr . . . it's we that *would* be taking the great road . . . if all Assynt, and all Coigeach, if Gairloch and Applecross and Kintail, if Knoydart and Moidart, Lochaber and Morvern and Appin and Lorne and the Long Island and the Small Isles and Skye could all be as drunk as I am just now they would all see as clearly as I see just now that this century which is exactly one hour and twenty-five minutes old is going to be the last century of their race . . . unless . . . unless . . . ”

The hunchback thrust down into the pocket of his waistcoat the large silver watch he had pulled out, and leaned back in the chair, searching with glazed eyes for the thread of his discourse.

“Unless what?” John asked.

Norman MacIver shook his head hopelessly.

“That's the worst of whisky,” he complained in a sad voice, “it shows a man what the truth is, and then just when he is expecting to give other people the benefit of his knowledge it deprives him of his natural eloquence.”

John went out of his way to visit the tailor several times in his own house, but without whisky inside him he was positively morose except for an occasional flash of sardonic wit. Sitting cross-legged on a platform that resembled a wooden bedstead and surrounded by odd bits of homespun and half-made garments, he would stitch away in a

discouraging silence whenever John tried to raise the topic on which he had held forth in the first small hours of the new century. On the day before John was to leave Assynt and return south he made a final attempt to revive the conversation of New Year's morning.

"Look here, I want to know if you were serious in what you said about Ireland and the future of this country?"

The hunchback looked up from the pair of trousers he was stitching.

"I'm not tasting just now."

"And unless you're tasting you have no opinions?"

"Only those I keep to myself."

When Macleod replied thus John had a sensation that the very land itself was rejecting him. Yet he could not accept the rebuff without one more effort.

"You don't trust me?"

"Och, Mr Ogilvie, don't be fretting yourself over what a fellow like me thinks. But I'll tell you this. If I had not been just blethering away in a dream and it were all a real prospect I'd be happy to think you and I were on the same side."

"Why I asked you that was because Ardvore suggested I should come and live up here and settle down. But I said I wouldn't do that unless there was a chance of doing something more than sentimentalize about a way of life which has passed or is rapidly passing. I said I'd feel of more use trying to do something in the world."

"And you told him quite right," said the tailor fiercely. "To hell with such fancy work, say I. What should become of you? You should just moulder away like an apple in a drawer. Not that I would mind, mark you,

what happened to you if it could help to give back life to this land; but it's too late, too late perhaps by a hundred years. William Ross understood in 1788 that it was too late when he wrote the only elegy for the death of the Prince, whom the rest of the world had forgotten. Too late . . . too late. So why would we be bothering ourselves about emigration and clearances and rack-renting and famine when we could produce John Brown to look after Queen Victoria? Could the Irish have given the world John Brown? Well, well, beannachd leibh, perhaps we'll be seeing you in the summer."

John looked doubtful.

"You're thinking Arvore will not be alive by then?" suggested the tailor.

"Why, he's looking in splendid health for a man of his age."

"Think you so? I would not give him very long now."

And when the day after this the old laird stood by the coach in Lochinver, waiting to bid his guest farewell, John perceived behind the vigorous frame and lusty face the threat of mortality. He tried to express his thanks for the visit, but Arvore cut him short.

"The pleasure has been mine, Iain Mac ghille bhuidhe. I wanted to bequeath a dream, and perhaps one day you will find it of value to yourself."

The tall figure of the laird standing at the door of the inn and waving farewell in the thin January sunlight was lost behind a curve of the road, and from the coach a couple of hours later John was watching the isolated blue-grey shape of Suilven, sprinkled now on the summit with snow, recede further and further as the west was left

behind until it sank out of sight below the bleak rolling moorland like a ship below the horizon.

"I wonder when I shall look at Suilven again?" John asked himself.

It was to be long enough.

On the way south John was seized with a desire to see the land of Angus and the house of Airlie. It was a tame experience after Assynt, and in the biting wind of the east the formative emotion from which might have been evolved a vital shape of patriotism withered. Yet when on an iron-grey morning he crossed the border into England there was in the sight of Carlisle a feeling of hostility which was something more than hatred for that bloody grave of a lost cause. He too was surrendering at Carlisle. He was one with the thousands upon thousands of other Scots who had surrendered at Carlisle to the way of the world.

All the other occupants of the third-class carriage from Glasgow except one had alighted by the time the train was reaching the end of Lancashire, and John who had been immersed in his own thoughts while dusk was deepening into night and the train roared on through the furnaces of the Black Country, became aware that his only companion was regarding him with an intent and anxious eye from the far corner of the compartment. The fancy occurred to him that this burly man with the walrus moustache and small bowler hat might be an escaped lunatic. In these days of corridors the fears

which could beset railway travellers who found themselves with suspicious companions on a long run between stations sound remote as a fairy-tale of the Grimms, but they were once upon a time everybody's experience.

Suddenly John was addressed by the stranger who had been staring at him.

"Young man," he said in a strong Lancashire accent, "I've been watching you."

"Have you?" John replied, wondering if the communication-cord was in working order.

"Well, perhaps it might be better to say that I've been watching your soul. It's been fluttering round and round this carriage like a butterfly, and it's just fluttered out of the window to be lost in the night."

"Has it, indeed?"

"Has it indeed? Yes, it has indeed. You may talk very off-handed about it like that. But you're sitting there at the moment without a soul. Nay, it's nought to laugh about, lad. If Last Trump sounded at this moment you wouldn't be laughing! Young man, you're an atheist."

John knew that madmen should be humoured, but he was not prepared to declare himself an atheist even to avoid a maniacal assault. He denied indignantly, with the indignation of offended social rather than religious susceptibilities, that he was an atheist.

"You may not think you're an atheist," his fellow-traveller persisted. "But you are an atheist. I can see it in your eye. I've just come down from hearing Dr Torrey and Mr Alexander, the great American evangelists, and though I found Jesus Christ some years back now—August 20th, 1896, on the beach at Douglas, to

be correct—I feel as if I'd found Him all over again. I want everybody to share in my happiness. Watching an atheist like you wrings my heart. It does indeed. It's frightful."

"But I tell you I'm not an atheist."

"Look here, young man, who knows best whether you're an atheist? You? Or me who've just been drinking deep of the fountain of eternal life with Dr Torrey and Mr Alexander? Besides, I've got a brother who's an atheist, and you look just like him—the same nasty kind of obstinate know-all expression. Eh, and, look here, this brother of mine lives at Wigan. We're just coming into Preston. I'll send a telegram and get him to come down to the station at Wigan and I'll introduce you to him. Of course he's a bit older than you, but the moment you lay eyes on him you'll see why I knew you were an atheist the moment I laid eyes on you."

John felt sorry for the Wigan atheist who was to be dragged up to the railway-station on this raw January evening to serve as a specimen; but there was no stopping the religious enthusiast who when the train drew up at Preston hustled off into the dark smoke-wreathed echoing confusion of the big railway-station to send off his telegram.

"That's right," said the enthusiast, washing his hands with satisfaction when he was back again in the compartment. "I've told my brother Jim to come right down from his place and wait for the train from the north. Well, I am glad I met you, because I'm hoping that when you two atheists see each other you'll both go back to your homes and find Our Loving Saviour waiting for you."

However, the meeting was not to take place. As the

train drew near to Wigan it became apparent that it was not going to stop. The enthusiast rushed to the window.

"Come quick, lad," he cried. "Train's not going to stop, but there's my brother Jim on the platform." He seized John by the arm and dragged him to the window. A solitary figure was standing on the empty platform gazing at the train which was rushing past him.

"There's atheist!" the enthusiast shouted. "Dost thou see him, lad? That's our Jim. And by what I could make out of his face as we dashed through he's just as much of an atheist as he ever was. Well," he went on as he took his seat after pulling up the window, "it was a bit disappointing you didn't get a better view of our Jim, but God's ways aren't our ways, and I wouldn't be surprised to get a letter when I reach home to say our Jim found Jesus Christ on his way back from the railway-station to-night. There's a purpose in everything. Yes, poor Jim, I may have saved his soul with that telegram of mine to-night. Oh, well, it was champion to see the way Dr Torrey and Mr Alexander were bringing them home to the Saviour in Glasgow. There were three women and three men saved within a few feet of where I was sitting in the hall. Left their sins behind them when they went out the same as if they were leaving an old programme. As sure as my name's Herbert Wilbraham I've seen the power and glory of the Lord in Glasgow. Mind you, I'm not a bigoted chap. Well, you can see that for yourself. I'm sorry you haven't found Jesus Christ, but it doesn't make me hate you. Not at all. I'm sorry for you, and when I get home to Cardiff I shan't forget you when I'm praying for all my friends. No, I'm not a bigoted chap, and here's something that will show you how broad-

minded I am. Down in Cardiff Mrs Wilbraham has a girl to help her with the rough work, and this girl is a Roman Catholic. That makes you sit up, eh? Well, I suppose we've got to call Roman Catholics Christians, but they're pretty near to heathens, as everyone knows; and yet whatever I might think of this girl's religious habits I wouldn't interfere with them. When she came to us she told Mrs Wilbraham that by rights she ought to get up of a Sunday morning and go to what she called early mass. 'Right,' I said. And every Sunday morning I go up and rap on her bedroom door and shout 'Come on, get up, lass, and be off to your massing'. Our minister, the Reverend Pocock, was a bit took aback when he heard we had a Romanist maid of all work, and he didn't quite like the idea of me getting up to rout her out to mass on a Sunday morning, me being a prominent communicant at Ebenezer, which is our Baptist chapel. And a nice homely little chapel it is. If you're ever in Cardiff I'd like to take you to one of our P.W.E.'s."

"P.W.E.?"

"Pleasant Wednesday Evening. Well, we're quite a happy family in the Lord at our P.W.E.'s, and that's no exaggeration. But where was I? Oh, yes, the Reverend Pocock. 'Look here, Mr Pocock,' I said to him, 'I grant you,' I said, 'this poor girl's religion isn't much, but it's something, and I reckon it's my duty to see she gets a chance to pick up even a crumb that falls from the Master's table.' I tell you, lad, the Reverend Pocock looked down his nose a bit at that, because I think he thought it was like blasphemy to admit that Romanism was as much as a crumb from the Master's table. Still, if he's a bit narrow, he's a good man, is Mr Pocock, and he's

brought up a family of fourteen to walk in the footsteps of the Lord. So I gave him a substantial subscription to our missions in Brazil, and that was that. Well, I'm sorry I'm not going all the way with you to Euston. As it is I'm getting off at Crewe to do a bit of business in Birmingham and roundabout before I go back to Cardiff at the end of the week. I wish I could have stopped your soul from fluttering about like a butterfly before we parted. I wish I could make you understand that Jesus Christ is travelling in this compartment with us at this very moment and that if you'd only look up with eyes of faith you'd see Him waiting for you with open arms. Think what it means, brother, to find the Saviour. All your sins washed away. Nothing to worry about ever again. Marching forward happily for the rest of your life toward the Throne of God. And He's here, brother. He is, really. He's here in this compartment waiting for you with open arms. He won't reject you. He's only waiting for you to make the first move. And you won't make it. It's the fool who hath said in his heart, there is no God."

"I have never said that."

"Then come and be washed in the blood of the Lamb."

"The nearest I ever felt to God so far," said John stiffly, "was in a Catholic church."

"Isn't that dreadful?" Mr Wilbraham ejaculated. "You might have felt just as near to Him in a theatre."

"Certainly much nearer to Him than I should have felt at your revivalist meeting in Glasgow," said John emphatically. "I distrust that kind of religious emotionalism. It reminds me of dogs barking at the moon. One dog starts off every dog in the neighbourhood."

"I wish I could wrestle with you, brother, all the way

to Euston," said Mr Wilbraham regretfully. "But business is business, and my business is in Birmingham."

The train pulled up at Crewe. The enthusiast took from his pocket-book a card.

"If ever you're in Cardiff, Mrs Wilbraham and me will be glad to give you a cup of tea. Don't forget. And, brother, don't forget either that Our Loving Saviour offers you a better invitation than that."

He extended a beefy hand which John grasped.

"What's the matter here?" asked Mr Wilbraham, looking at the platform along which passengers and porters were gathered in small knots.

He alighted. Presently he came hurrying back to the compartment he had left.

"Eh, do you know what's happened? The Queen's dead after all. She died at half-past six this evening. They had the news about five minutes ago, and it's left them quite staggered. I asked a porter what was the platform for the Birmingham train and he said to me, 'The Queen's dead'. Just like that. And I'm bound to say it gave me a bit of a turn."

John had the compartment to himself for the rest of the journey. In years to come he was to sum up the Victorian era in the picture of Crewe station on that January night, in the black-and-white North-Western trains exhaling their steam on the dank nocturnal air; in the knots of people mostly dressed with the respectable sobriety that was considered befitting for a railway journey unless rank and fortune bestowed the right to wear a check ulster like that individual with mutton-chop whiskers, a heavy moustache, and a case of guns; in the tawny glow of the furnace-lit sky; in the clang of the freshly heated foot-

warmers that were being thrust into the cold frowsty carriages; in the permeating ugliness and utility of it all. But that was to be a retrospective vision. At the moment he was thinking that his father would be Alexander Ogilvie, K.C., instead of Alexander Ogilvie, Q.C., that Her Majesty's Theatre would be His Majesty's Theatre, and that after nearly four hundred years there would be a King Edward.

When John reached home he found a telegram from the eldest Miss Macleod to say that her father had died suddenly that morning. In answer to his letter of sympathy Miss Macleod wrote that she and her sisters were leaving Ardvore in order to live at Bournemouth. That visit to Assynt receded into a far remote past, yet without losing the clarity of its shape and the brightness of its colour, like a dream dreamt in childhood.

A detachment of the First V.B. Loamshire Regiment came to London to share in lining the streets with other soldiers of the Queen; but John was too junior a subaltern to get a chance as one of the officers for this occasion of mournful ceremony. However, upon that still grey Saturday he was in Hyde Park to watch from near the Achilles Statue the procession move along toward the Marble Arch. Poignantly indeed, yet somehow without appropriateness, Chopin's Funeral March came wailing up from Constitution Hill; but as the sombre *exequy* entered the Park there sounded the muffled drums of the Dead March in Saul, a fit lament for that Imperial mistress. There was little to see through the serried crowds except the dark greatcoats and plumes of mounted kings and princes and the tops of the Guards' bearskins; but beneath the tarnished silver of the February sky the

music mingling with the emotion of the aspectful populace seemed to assume shape and pass not so much audibly as visibly. The quietness of the spectators was marmoreal. The snowdrops in the sallow winter grass were not more quiet. One man had climbed up a plane-tree to get a better view of the procession, but he had misjudged the direction and finding himself with his face to the trunk, his back to Park Lane, he tried to turn round just as the first notes of music were heard beyond St George's Hospital. In the sudden hush the snapping of a few twigs as he tried to turn was loud, and the expression on the faces looking up at the sound so frightened the man that he did not dare to move again until the funereal pomp had passed, but astride a bough had to be gazing at the trunk of the plane-tree not six inches away from his nose.

While John was debating with himself what he should do to avoid an anticlimax after the last notes of the music had died away beyond the Marble Arch and the populace were flowing off in black streams, bearing with them a few moments of authentic history, he heard his name called and turning was surprised by the sight of Edward Fitzgerald.

"I didn't think *you* would be at the funeral."

"It wasn't out of respectful loyalty and certainly not in sorrow that I came," said Fitzgerald. "Victoria gave to Ireland not quite five weeks of the sixty-three years she reigned, and three weeks of them were not given till last April. So I thought I could spare five minutes from my life to watch her pass."

"Five weeks? Was that all?"

"Hardly five weeks, and she was always treated like a perfect lady by the Irish she hated and who hated her."

John made haste to tell Fitz about Michael Davitt's notion for the future of the Islands and West Highlands as related to him by the hunchbacked tailor in Assynt.

The Irishman laughed, so loudly that several passers-by turned round to stare at him in disapproval for thus profaning this solemn day.

"They might join us when the green isle is gold, and that means never. All right, Judge, when I take the hangman's drop for Ireland I'll call on you to do the same for Scotland, for I'm hanged if I'll be hanged for two countries. No, no, Judge boy, leave the land of your fathers to lament Victoria and give up your dreaming. Hell, we're still far enough away from freedom in Ireland, even although the Irish regiments are now allowed to sport the shamrock on St Patrick's day for being broths of bhoys and killing the wicked savage Boers."

"I suppose you'll allow that Michael Davitt suffered for Ireland?"

"He suffered right enough."

"And don't you think that a man suffering for a long time in penal servitude might see more clearly than others?"

"Almighty God might grant him that consolation," Fitzgerald agreed. "But, och, it's a wild wild dream entirely, and the time for Irish dreaming is past. Anyway, listen. Would you like to believe you're a conspirator, Judge? Some of my bold fellows are making a night of it to-night down at Joe O'Malley's place in Pimlico. Something passed with that gun-carriage now on the way to Paddington, and the passing must be suitably marked. Will you come, Judge?"

John hesitated. A celebration of Queen Victoria's funeral was going a little far.

"Don't look so grave, Judge. It's the period not the person we're considering, and by now Victoria is a monument. You wouldn't mind playing ring a ring o' roses round that?"

He pointed to the Albert Memorial, the barbarous gilded canopy of which was gleaming dully through the leafless trees

"All right. I'll come."

"Good for the yeoman captain with fiery glare! 122 Claverton Street, any time after eight. Guinness and Johnny Jameson the only drinks, but plenty of both."

"Claverton Street?"

"That's the place. The Claverton Street Mystery. Where bloody murder was done about fifteen years ago—at least it wasn't so bloody—because the lady murdered her moth-eaten husband with chloroform, but Sir Edward Clarke pulled Adelaide Bartlett out of it and the verdict was not guilty. And wasn't she the lucky one? Well then, we'll be seeing you? And now I must dash for a bus back to the Hospital. What the hell I'm walking this way for I don't know. What a charmer you are, Judge!"

"Well, I'm walking in the wrong direction too," John pointed out.

When the time came for John to set out to his party he sought a yellow omnibus at the Britannia, Camden Town, which carried him as far as Westminster Bridge where he alighted and walked along in the shadow of the Houses of Parliament toward the Embankment. That expensive

pile of Sunday school gothic might stand as the cenotaph of the Victorian era on this night which was the end of it. Coming toward him John saw a solitary figure whom in the shine of a street lamp he recognized as a member of the Cabinet, a favourite target for the shafts of Liberal caricaturists like Carruthers Gould. Parliament was not sitting to-night, and this statesman, whose eyebrows had the tufted diabolism of Bernard Shaw, smiling to himself, it might be, at some sally for which he was fancying he had an audience, was like a ghost revisiting his earthly paradise. An empty hansom passed at the moment. The statesman hailed it, and John heard him give the cabby an address in Mayfair before he sank comfortably down behind the apron with that air of leisure soon to become a lost gesture like bowing with a chapeau-bras. Not that John foresaw the end now. On the contrary he felt irritated by the lack of any sign of such an end in this the first February of the twentieth century, with Queen Victoria in her tomb. This member of the Unionist Cabinet had for him the hideous permanence of one of those trousered statues in the vicinity of the Houses of Parliament. The dreary term of that Unionist Government which was to expire in such ignominy five years hence had but recently begun. The Queen was buried; but it looked as if Victorianism was to drag on indefinitely; and how should it do otherwise with figures at the helm like that figure in the hansom?

It was the fashion for the youth that was maturing after the Great War to deplore the savourless life to which it was doomed, and in its complaints there was always a suggestion of having been robbed by the older generation of its birthright. The youth that was maturing at the

beginning of the century was just as heavily oppressed by what it felt were the security and sameness of existence as the youth that came afterwards was to be oppressed by its insecurity and emptiness. Unless the depth of what was seeming the ever-increasing monotony of modern life be appreciated, one of the causes of the Great War will be missed, and one of the causes of the next war left unassailed. John walking along beside the Thames toward the bleak stucco of Pimlico tried to work himself up to the pitch of hysterical horror he had lately been admiring in James Thomson's alcoholic nightmare poem *The City of Dreadful Night*. A shivering prostitute leaning over the parapet became one more unfortunate whose attempted suicide was to bring a touch of colour into the monotone.

"Where are you going, darling?" she turned away from her contemplation of the river to enquire of John. The bathos was profound. "Wouldn't you like somebody to love you nicely to-night? It *has* turned nasty and cold, hasn't it? What's the time? Half-past eight? What a life, eh?"

John explained that an engagement prevented his accepting her invitation.

"All right, Claude, give me half a crown for my cab-fare home, there's a love, and if I spend it on gin it won't be your fault."

John had just presented her with half a crown when a Salvation Army lass thrust her bonnet between them.

"You're looking for Jesus, dear, if you only knew it," she told the girl earnestly.

"Rats to you," she snapped. "I'm looking for a nice boy to cuddle me—that's what I'm looking for."

John turned away. Norman MacIver . . . Torquil

Macleod . . . Herbert Wilbraham . . . Queen Victoria . . . the man who climbed up the tree to watch the funeral . . . Edward Fitzgerald . . . the member of the Cabinet . . . that tart without an overcoat . . . that Salvation Army lass with her shapeless mouth and watery eyes . . . it made immortality a difficult thing to imagine. Immortality? But it was even more difficult to imagine the extent of futility that would be implied without it. Immortality was the rub. When once a human being were assured of that, it would be imperative to accept the religion which offered the most reasonable preparation for it. And when once such a religion were accepted, it would provide the true basis, the only basis in fact for a political creed.

Claverton Street, straight and wide and respectable, was reached. What had Fitz meant when he had talked about murder here? This was the least appropriate of the grey Pimlico streets for murder. What was the number of the house he was visiting? 122. Conspiracy? The Cato Street conspiracy. John's heart quickened slightly as he rang the bell of 122. He was a little disappointed to be shown up to a room on the first floor full of young men drinking whisky and stout, fumy with tobacco-smoke and loud with chatter. Fitzgerald introduced him to the host, Joe O'Malley, who was a brawny fellow with cheeks like Bath chaps, and like himself a medical student. John was set down with four others to a game of poker. The glass of whisky at his right hand was kept filled and under its influence he began to play a daring game. In two hours he had won over seven pounds. By midnight he had won fourteen pounds. His pockets were heavy with silver and copper.

"Hell, this must be my last hand. I've got to catch a train across the river at Vauxhall Bridge by twenty past twelve," exclaimed one of the players who had won nearly as much as John and drunk a little more. He was the only one besides John who had sat steadily at the table for three hours. The other players had resigned their places broke to others who in turn had been broken.

"Sixpence to play," announced John, who had been dealt a flush of hearts which floated before his eyes like strawberries in syrup.

"I make it a bob," said Barry Kiernan, the man from over the river, who was as swarthy as the knave of spades and would have made a superb figure in the Gunpowder Plot, but who was actually a bank-clerk in Streatham and preoccupied entirely with horse-racing and cards.

"I raise the ante to six and one . . . I mean one and six," John announced.

"Two bob," said Kiernan sharply.

The other three players threw in their hands. Let the two winners of the evening pluck each other.

"Half a crown," said John, whose flush of hearts was now beginning to look like a necklace of rubies.

"Hell," ejaculated Kiernan. "I'm standing."

"How many cards?" asked the dealer.

"Hell, I said I'm standing. I don't want a bloody card."

"How many cards, Ogilvie?"

John looked at his hand. What was Kiernan standing on? Blast it, he might be holding a full house. Four, five, six, seven, and jack of hearts. He discarded the knave. If he broke his flush he would let it go with the loss of the ante. What was this? My god, it was the eight of hearts.

That showed the importance of playing poker when one had had enough whisky to make one a little audacious.

"Half a crown to see me," John proclaimed.

"Raise you to five bob," said Kiernan.

"Seven and six."

"Half a quid."

The betting went up by half-crowns to five pounds two and six.

"Damn it, I *must* catch my train," said Kiernan. "I'll see you. By god, a straight flush! And I held a full hand aces high!"

He swallowed his whisky, paid John in silver, shook hands with him affectionately, and with a shout of 'Good-night, boys', rushed from the room, with not a minute in hand to catch his train.

"It's a damn good thing I've won about twenty pounds, Fitz," John told his friend. "Because all this tin in my pocket is very useful as a weight. I really can stand extraordinarily steady with this weight in my pockets. I am as steady as the Abbot of Aberbrothock. And that's a damned difficult word to say—a damned difficult word to say. I don't suppose if you searched the dictionary from head to foot you could find a more damn difficult word to say than *Aber—Aberbrothock*."

"I bet I couldn't, Judge," Fitzgerald agreed with a grin.

"The only thing I'm a bit disappointed about," John went on, "is that no steps were taken to solve anything at all to-night. Still, I've enjoyed myself . . . where's O'Malley? I want to tell him how much I've enjoyed myself. The good old Abbot of *Aber—of Aber—of Aberbrothock* couldn't have enjoyed himself more than I

have, but I think I'll have to get home pretty soon because I'm very anxious to pay my father back some money I lost at Geneva last summer, and I'm in a p-possession to do it now thanks to this ripping evening which I've enjoyed tre . . . very much."

"Look here, Judge, I'll put you in a cab," Fitzgerald offered. "Because you're bloody drunk."

"It's only the fumes, Fitz. It's nothing except the fumes. You see, so long as I was looking at the cards, I didn't observe the way the fumes were behaving, but now that I'm standing up, and by Jove, with all this money in my pocket, I *can* stand up! I may be swinging about in my head a bit, but my feet are as steady as an elephant . . . yes, the fumes are much more noticeable now. The gas isn't going out, is it? No, I thought it wasn't. Well, there you are. You see the fumes have got into the gas now."

"Come on, Judge, I'll put you in a cab."

John shook hands several times with everybody in turn, and floated downstairs in a mood of profound benevolence which found expression in the somewhat excessive courtesy of apologizing to the newel at the bottom of the stairs for bumping into it.

"Did you tell me, Fitz, that there was a murder in this street once upon a time?" he asked, as holding his friend's arm he walked along Claverton Street with him toward a cab-rank.

"I did."

John was overcome by the absurdity of such a notion. He sat down on the kerb and laughed loudly.

"Get up, you damned ass. What are you laughing at?"

"I'm laughing at the idea of anybody murdering some-

body else in a street like this. The Abbot of Aberbrothock would laugh at that. Look at the houses! They're the most respectable houses I've ever seen. Which number was the house where the murder was?"

"I don't remember."

"That's because you're drunk, Fitz, and it's nothing to be proud of."

"Get up, you ass."

"It's becoming questionable if I shall ever be able to get up again. You don't seem to realize that I've got about thirty half-crowns and thirty florins and a hundred shillings and God knows how many sixpences and coppers in my pockets. I'm sitting here like the Inchcape rock, and I don't believe the Abbot of Aberbrothock could move me."

But a minute or two later a hansom approached and John was persuaded to make an effort to rise and get into it. Fitzgerald drove with him as far as Victoria Station where he left the cab to catch a train to West Kensington.

John by himself became indignant with the length and ugliness of Victoria Street. As the hansom jogged on between the tall houses, it seemed as long and as ugly as the Victorian era. By this time the Johnnie Jameson he had been drinking all the evening was exercising its full effect. Fancy turned to fact as in a dream. Victoria Street became the Victorian era from which he must escape. He pushed up the trap in the roof of the hansom.

"I'm getting down here."

"But hadn't you better let me drive you where your friend said you wanted to go?" the cabbie demurred.

"I'm getting down here," John repeated firmly. The hansom was nearing a turning that led toward St James's

Park. The driver pulled up. It was none of his business if the young fellow wanted to play the giddy goat. And when he had been paid five shillings for that short drive from Claverton Street he felt more sure than ever that the business of his fare's behaviour should rest upon his own shoulders.

John set out northwards, and presently came to the bridge over the lake in St James's Park, to that bridge where, night or day, one may feel nearer to the heart of London than anywhere.

St James's Park : St James's School. Buckingham Palace in the haze of this quiet February night loomed as impressive as once upon a time for him had loomed the bulk of St James's School. St James's School! And but for his father's marrying again he might still have been there. The ghastly reflection brought a dankness and a chill to John's forehead. He vomited with beautiful accuracy into the lake and a moment or two later was able to feel the exhilaration of being drunk without physical discomfort, in which condition he agreeably skimmed the shell-strewn surface of the path on his way across the deserted park. In Birdcage Walk he fancied that a policeman was regarding his birdlike progress with disapproval. There was the perfect Victorian figure. Yes, he might still have been at St James's School instead of walking across St James's Park like this (or was he flying?) if his father had not taken it into his head to marry again.

“It's all right, Constable, I'm not really drunk.”

“That's right, sir, but I should make for home if I was you.”

“The trouble is, Constable, that owing to the haze I

cannot see the North Star, and therefore I may miss Hampstead and find myself back at St James's School, which would be extremely unpleasant, for I have no wish whatever to find myself back at school."

"But your best plan is to keep right on past St James's Palace into Pall Mall, and if I was you, sir, I'd take a hansom there."

"But I've just got rid of a hansom in Victoria Street, Constable, owing to the damnable resemblance between Victoria Street and the Victorian era of which you are the chief contribution to civilization according to my friend the Abbot of Aberbrothock who is my familiar spirit tonight."

"Well, I hope you won't let him get too familiar, sir."

"No, I'll take care that doesn't happen. But would you think I was getting too familiar if I invited you to drink the health of the Abbot of Aberbrothock on a future occasion? I happened to win quite a lot at poker this evening, and I should like to offer you a little souvenir of the Victorian era in the shape of the late Queen."

"Thank you, sir," said the constable, looking round as he accepted the half-crown, to see that there was nobody at hand to misjudge the courtesy. "And now, sir, I'd like to see you safely out of the park. In fact I'd like to see you safely into a hansom."

"No, no, Constable, I must walk a little more first. My father is in the habit of working late sometimes, and I shouldn't like him to think that my friend the Abbot of Aberbrothock was anything but perfectly sober."

"Just so, sir, but you want to be careful with that money you're jingling about in your pockets. There's some queer characters about at this time of night."

John wandered on along Pall Mall and thence up Regent Street into Piccadilly. From time to time a feminine hand plucked at his sleeve and a voice, Cockney or French usually, proposed dalliance. He had been so steadily deaf to these voices, so indifferent to those appealing fingers that he could not understand how he suddenly found himself seated in a hansom beside a huge woman whose hat seemed to spread over his head like a tree. He was even more surprised when she began to address him in German, so much surprised that not until the hansom pulled up at a house in a mildewed terrace somewhere off the Marylebone Road was he able to explain that a mistake had occurred.

“You not with me come home? Why you make me a fool? I give you love, *nein?*”

“Nein, and neither I nor the Abbot of Aberbrothock speak German. Here’s ten shillings for you.”

He heard the golden coin tinkle down upon the pavement and jumped back into the hansom.

“Where to, sir?”

“What’s the time?”

“Just gone two o’clock, sir.”

“Drive me to Swiss Cottage.”

Clip-clop. Clip-clop. Clip-clop. Clarence Gate. Clip-clop. Clip-clop. Clip-clop. Lord’s. Clip-clop. Clip-clop. Clip-clop. St John’s Wood Road. Clip-clop. Clip-clop. Clip-clop. Swiss Cottage.

“Here you are, sir. Quite all right?”

“Quite all right, thanks.”

The driver drummed upon his chest gorilla-wise.
“Turned much colder to-night. Did you see the last of the old lady?”

"I was in Hyde Park."

"I missed it myself. Well, I suppose it don't do to say so, but I think she'd been running long enough. A change'll do a bit of good all round. That's my idear anyway. Now we shan't be long, as the saying is. Sure you're quite all right, sir?"

The cabbie's last question may have been prompted by the three half-crowns which John had handed to him.

"Quite all right. Good-night."

"Good-night, sir. And thank you."

The driver shook the reins, and the hansom turned back to the road by which it had come, leaving its fare to walk up Fitzjohn's Avenue; the effect of which was just the reverse of what John had expected. Whether it was the sharpness of the Hampstead air or the effort of walking uphill, his head was going round much faster by the time he reached the dignity of Church Row. It was going round so fast that when he looked up at his house and saw the light in his father's library he decided to walk on toward the Heath in the hope of sobering himself. He sat down on a bench beside the road near the pond, and in the way that a sleepless man will seek sleep or a tipsy man sobriety he set himself a mental task which on this occasion was to recall where he had been and what he had been doing in every February for all the years of which he could keep count.

February 1900. This time last year. How far away it was! It had been when everybody was thinking that the British Empire was in actual danger and when it had been proposed to save it with the City Imperial Volunteers and the Imperial Yeomanry. He had considered running away

from school to enlist. It had been when he and Emil were beginning to grow really intimate. A single year ago.

February 1899. The Upper Fifth at St James's. Cray's form. Monroe's *Homeric Grammar*. Buttmann's *Lexilogus*. Bits of *Maud* into elegiacs. Bits of *Enoch Arden* into elegiacs. Bits of *The Lotus Eaters* into hexameters. Demosthenes. Dust.

February 1898. The Middle Fifth. Lemaire's form. Lemaire pacing the class-room floor like a swan gliding backwards and forwards over the water. The Sixth *Aeneid*. Or was it the Fourth *Aeneid*? The Fourth, of course. Lemaire had called Dido a monumentally tiresome woman. Lemaire with flowers always on his desk and lavender-water on his handkerchief and a roaring fire in a grate instead of those filthy hot-water pipes which infected all the other class-rooms in the school. Lemaire had been a great joke on account of his effeminacy and ridiculous affectations, but he had had a jolly good notion of teaching Latin. Yes, he had diffused upon his class-room an air of civilization. One of the people with whom it was a pleasure to read Horace.

February 1897. Upper Fourth. A. Caryll's form. Amusing enough. The *Ion* of Euripides. Cicero *Pro Milone*.

February 1896. Lower Fourth. Majoribanks. Dull. Majoribanks had a beard. You couldn't ever rag in a form when the usher had a beard. Pi, as well as dull.

February 1895. Lower Third. Foxy Braxterd. Square bowler. Tight pin-striped trousers. Sardonic wit, but genial.

February 1894. Randell's. He must have been in

Vernon's form. The Oxford and Cambridge boat race. At least practice for it but not yet on the tide-way. Everybody wearing dark-blue swallows or light-blue swallows in their buttonholes. Oxford always winning. Skating on the Round Pond. Or was that in 1895? Or both years?

February 1893. Wagstaff's form. His classroom door had glass panels. There were only two like that at Randell's.

February 1892. Heavy snow. Great snowball fights. A cut over the forehead from a snowball with a stone in it. The scar was still there. It must have been that February when he and Scott struck their blow for liberty.

Looking back over these last nine Februarys it would seem that the only real sign of life he had ever given was in that February when he was nine years old. There had been a giant's-stride in a corner of the playground of Randell's, that old mulberry garden which once had been a wide prairie and had shrunk to nothing last time he had revisited it. The giant's-stride stood behind the big pear-tree, beyond it a wooden paling separating the playground from a market-garden. John was once again rushing out in the eleven o'clock 'break' to bag a rope and go slithering round the gravel with a dozen or so other small boys. Somebody discovered that, if you took your rope round all the other ropes, when the others started you were carried out to swing deliciously through the air at right angles to the post. This was called a 'ride', and during the break each small boy in turn was given a ride in turn by the efforts of his companions. This procedure had been watched by one of the fellows in the Modern Class, louts all of them who stayed on at Randell's till they were

sixteen or seventeen, feeding like fat pike on the four hundred troutlets under fourteen. The Modern Class had been abolished before John left Randell's, and when it went the bad bullying went with it. God, it *had* been bullying in those days! Worthy of *St Winifred's*. People talked about *Eric*. But *St Winifred's* was a better school book. The worst bully of all at Randell's had been that long swine Gollock. Yes, Gollock. Gollock cramming twenty kids in through the trapdoor in the old stable and shutting them down in a dark hole where they could hardly breathe. Gollock making a stink himself and swearing that one of them had made a stink and hauling them up one by one out of the hole and forcing them to choose between chewing up a lump of mud and getting a dozen laid on as hard as he could with a cat-o'-nine-tails he had fashioned from some old reins. He and Scott had refused to eat dirt for Gollock and they had been skinned for it. He could see Scott now in his old-fashioned braided broadcloth suit with tight breeches, and he could hear Scott's voice telling Gollock that he'd go to hell before he ate dirt for such a clown as him. Scott's accent, the only Scottish accent in the London school, had been the very accent of Liberty herself. And it was he and Scott who had overthrown Gollock, that long greasy swine. Gollock had taken it into his head to make the kids give him rides on the giant's-stride, not only in the break, but from two o'clock to five and twenty past two every day before afternoon school. Gollock had bagged all their tops too in that term of tops. He had even bagged some kid's peg-top with heart of ebony and mother-o'-pearl, and the kid had wept so bitterly over his top that he had been sick in the class-room. And Gollock had threatened to bag all their

marbles too when next term came with marbles. Indians. Blood Alleys. Glassies. Commonies. Gollock would bag them all. Gollock in fact had enslaved some forty or fifty of the smallest boys in the school and made their life a continuous misery and incessant tribute likely to endure until he left Randell's.

"Look here, Ogilvie. I'll no' let that clown make a fool of me any longer. Are you game to join with me?" Scott had demanded.

"Harmodius and Aristogeiton!" John proclaimed aloud to the Hampstead night in which he was sitting in search of sobriety.

Not a word had they said to the others; but next day both had requested from their form-masters permission to leave the room at half-past ten. Out in the deserted play-ground, they had crept cautiously past the lav. to the giant's-stride and with a Norwegian knife severed most of the strands of the rope, the handle of which Gollock in his pride had marked with his own initials G. G., the rope from the end of which he used to soar round the pole while a dozen galley-slaves toiled for his pleasure. And at the break half an hour later they had mustered as usual, poor slaves, not daring to defy the tyrant. Gollock had gone soaring round about half a dozen times when the rope parted. Gollock had soared over the wooden paling and landed in a cucumber-frame in the market-garden to lie unconscious with a broken leg and a face cut all to pieces. Gollock had been taken to hospital and had never come back to Randell's. The school authorities had forbidden rides in future. What did that matter? The tyrant had been laid low. And Scott had died of some fever a month or two afterwards. Had Scott lived, the years after 1892

might not have been so prosaic. February 1892, that was a date.

And February 1891. A black, black month, the month in which his mother had died. John looked uneasily over his shoulder at the dark Heath in the three o'clock silence and chill. Were the dead aware of the life they had left? A poor sight he would be to his mother at this moment.

February 1890, 1889, 1888, 1887, 1886, 1885, 1884, 1883 . . . no doubt he was always with her in those Februarys. They were a single February. Elaine the fair, Elaine the lovable, Elaine the lily-maid of Astolat . . . firelight flickering over the flowery pattern upon the walls, over the daisies and the columbines in his mother's own little room, over the golden daisies embroidered on her warm brown velvet dress. And her voice reading . . . *Elaine the fair, Elaine the lovable, Elaine the lily-maid of Astolat . . . whose names are five sweet symphonies: Cecily, Gertrude, Magdalen, Margaret and Rosaly.* . . .

John rose from the bench and walked back to Church Row. The light was still burning in his father's library. He considered creeping past upstairs to bed without being heard, but decided against it. Anyway, he wanted to pay back the money lost in Geneva.

The barrister was still at his desk when his son came in.

"Hullo!"

"Hullo! Where have you been?"

"I was at a party of some friends," John said, with what he supposed was a masterly deliberation of speech which would suggest an evening of unimpaired sobriety.

"Enjoy yourself?"

"Very much. We played poker. And I won about

twenty pounds. I thought I'd like to pay you back that money I lost in Geneva."

John concentrating intently on clarity of enunciation allowed himself to be careless in other respects, with the result that in trying to get out the loose silver in his pockets he dropped most of it on the floor.

"I'll count it. I want to pay you back the exact amount," he insisted as he started groping round the library on all fours for the coins.

"You'd better leave it to-night," said his father. "And I think you'd better get off to bed. You're a little drunk."

"A little drunk?" John echoed.

"Yes, get off to bed. I've still half an hour's work to do on this case. Don't forget to turn out the gas in your room."

Many witnesses had walked down from the box at the Old Bailey after a long cross-examination by Alexander Ogilvie with that feeling of having been turned inside out with which his only son now went off to bed.

"But how the deuce did he know I *had* been drinking?" John asked of his reflection in the wardrobe mirror.

In the morning John noticed that Watson was staring curiously at something on the floor of his room, and asked her what she was looking at.

"I'm looking at your clothes, Master John."

"What's the matter with them?"

"There's nothing the matter with them. I never saw them folded up so neat before. But whyever did you want to leave them on the hearthrug with the coal-scuttle on top of them?"

"The coal-scuttle?" John repeated in bewilderment.

Watson held up the utensil.

"If you don't believe me . . ." she began.

"I was looking for something, and I must have forgotten I'd lifted the coal-scuttle."

Watson sniffed loudly.

After breakfast Alexander Ogilvie called his son into the library. The money John had won at poker was stacked in heaps of silver on his desk.

"Twenty-one pounds thirteen shillings and sixpence," he said. "I'm not sure whether money won at cards be the best foundation for a banking account, but you earned it yourself, and that is in its favour. Anyway, I want you to put it in the bank. I had been proposing to give you a quarterly allowance of twenty-five pounds until you go up to the University in October, when of course that will have to be considerably increased. You will now have forty-six pounds thirteen shillings and sixpence at the Loam branch of the London and County Bank. I shall pay in twenty-five pounds on April 1st, and a further twenty-five on July 1st. Here is the first cheque. You will pay it in yourself and find out from the cashier how to write a cheque. If you are anxious to drink and gamble you will within limits be able to gratify your inclinations without being under the embarrassing necessity of asking me for the necessary cash."

"I shan't drink and I shan't gamble," said John.

His father looked at him sharply.

"Capital! I rather fancy that's a fair resolve. But mind you, John, it's not a promise to me. I'm not anxious to hamper you with sentimental obligations. You'll have the income from your own money when you come of age, though the capital won't be yours until you are twenty-

five. In fact you will have the income from your money when you go up to Exeter."

John went back to Milbourne that afternoon. Before he left he had a talk with his stepmother.

"Did you hear I'd made rather an ass of myself last night?"

"No, John, did you? What did you do?"

"Well, I got rather tight. Father was awfully decent about it."

"Was he? I *am* so glad, John."

"I think he's a good deal more human since he married you."

"Oh, he was always very human."

"Or perhaps I'm growing more human," John added.
"Look here, Elise, you might tell him that I thought he was awfully decent, will you?"

"Be sure I'll tell him."

While the dingy train made its slow way from Liverpool Street toward Loamshire through the slums of the East End John thought how appropriate it was that such a hideous squalor should infect the approach to London from this direction. Here was the symbol of a purely Saxon England. He turned away from the backs of mean houses, from the broken panes of windows through which pallid children and harassed women gazed incuriously at the snorting train, from the empty window-boxes waiting for the flowers from penny packets of seed, from the tattered washing in back yards, from the roofs and chimneys and

public-houses at the corners of festering streets, from the evidence of degraded poverty which made the British Empire a brassbound mockery of goodness, truth and beauty. How could people talk of patriotism and allow those slums to continue? But that was part of the falsity of Victorianism. And another part of its falsity was the relation between human beings. He had had to ask Elise to convey his appreciation of his father's attitude over last night. Had he attempted to do so, it would have embarrassed his father no less than himself. If his mother had lived, would he by now have been as remote from her? And in their relationship with each other did his father and his stepmother always place a barrier between them? Was it still possible to love as people loved in poetry? So much seemed to be vanishing with progress. Did every mechanical gain rob human nature of some equivalent power in itself? It was the dread of that effect which inspired people like Fitz. But to believe that material progress was a delusion involved a fearful pessimism about life unless one were assured of a life beyond this one. And if one were assured of that it would be the duty of such a creed to fight against any form of material progress which benefited only a portion of humanity. Faith? Was it faith to pray for faith? On an impulse John knelt on the dusty floor of the empty third-class compartment. He directed his desire for faith toward that so indifferent-seeming divine muteness, and when he rose from his knees he half expected to see Christ sitting in a corner of the carriage as Mr Herbert Wilbraham had assured him. He was in the habit of doing. There was nobody. Nevertheless John felt that his sudden gesture had not been absurd. There was a kind of warmth in the compartment, and

looking out of it he saw in the window of a degraded house three children laughing and waving to the passing train. Their yellow hair was fluffed out like the hair of the angels of Benozzo Gozzoli. Riding out to Milbourne in the filmy dusk John felt that the leafless winter trees and hedges had never been so much alive.

Drill with the company was a corrective to the emotional thinking of the last month. Pacey-Foote had gone back to Oxford. Meade was down with influenza. John with the help of the non-commissioned officers and the goodwill of the men handled A Company like a veteran. Orders came for the battalion to line the streets of Loam for the solemn proclamation of King Edward VII by the herald in the presence of the Mayor and Corporation. It was a white-kid-glove occasion, a scarlet-and-silver-lace occasion, a parade-Wellingtons occasion. All of what Dr Johnson called the 'reference to futurity' was set aside in order to cope with the need of getting the company into position under the eyes and within earshot of Colonel Haviland himself.

"Keep cool, sir. You're doing fine," whispered Colour-sergeant Capstick. "Ease 'em off a bit now, sir. You're doing fine, sir. Captain Meade couldn't have done it better."

At this moment the right flank of A Company some fifty yards away was seen to fall back in some confusion. The commanding officer and Sergeant Capstick hurried along to find out the reason.

"It was the police, sir," explained Corporal Sowerbutts indignantly. "It was the Inspector ordered us back."

John felt that his career as a disciplinarian was again at stake. If he accepted the right of the police to order the

military about he should never be able to give another order himself.

"Why didn't you refer the Inspector to my orders, Corporal?"

"Well, sir, I would have done if Inspector Blencoe could ever listen to anybody excepting himself."

Corporal Sowerbutts might have added that as recently as last Saturday night he had had some experience of Inspector Blencoe's inability to hear the other side when arguing with him about the number of beers he had drunk.

John ordered the half-company to number, and then brought the first twenty men a couple of paces to the front. The line had hardly been re-established when back came Inspector Blencoe with two constables.

"Come along now, get back there, you men," he ordered, without a glance at John.

"Inspector," said John sharply, "you mustn't interfere with my men. If you're dissatisfied with my disposition of them you must see Colonel Haviland and get his permission to ask me to move them further back."

"Come, come," said the Inspector impatiently. "The police are in charge of order in the streets to-day."

"Not at all. If the military are lining the streets, the military are responsible for order."

"The military!" exclaimed the Inspector contemptuously. "First time I ever heard the Volunteers called the military? Come along now, get back there, you chaps."

But this time the Loamshires stood firm, and in their resistance to the Inspector and his two constables there was a hint of that dogged spirit which had made the old county regiments the backbone of the British Army. The

Loamshires had fought with Marlborough in Flanders. They were not going to budge for the Loamshire police.

The Captain of D Company which was lining the High Street beyond A Company came along to see what was the matter. This was Henry Falconer, the only son of Lord Warburton, the biggest landowner round the ancient market town of Stanstead in the northern half of the county where D Company was recruited. Henry Falconer was a tall agreeable fellow of about thirty, the junior captain in the First Loamshire Volunteers, but as the heir to his father an important figure in Loamshire life.

"In trouble, Ogilvie?" he drawled indolently, tugging at a small fair moustache which for that date was unusually small.

John explained the situation.

"This officer is perfectly right, Inspector," he said. His voice was pleasant, but there was an assurance in it which warned Inspector Blencoe that argument would not be welcome.

"Well, sir, the police have a ticklish job to-day," he suggested deferentially.

"Quite so, Inspector. That's why the military have been called upon to help," said Falconer.

This time there was no contemptuous ejaculation from the Inspector. Whatever might be his personal opinion of the Volunteers, he was not prepared to voice it in front of the heir of old Lord Warburton who, as everybody knew, was cracked on the Volunteers and who in his day had commanded this very battalion. He saluted, and with his two attendant constables he moved on to assert the majesty of the police elsewhere.

"So Meade's not here?" Falconer asked.

"No, he's laid up. And as Pacey-Foote couldn't get down from Oxford I'm in command of the Company."

"Good man. Looking pretty smart too," he added with an approving glance at the die-hards of A Company. "Poor old Blencoe doesn't mean any harm, but he can't get used to seeing the lads of the village in scarlet. Will Meade be fit enough to join in this affair next week?"

The affair next week was a route march on Saturday to Paxford, a village equidistant from Stanstead, Loam, and Dolby, where three companies of the Loamshires were to meet after a march of about twelve miles.

"He may be, but I shouldn't think so," said John hopefully.

"We shall have rather a jolly time, I expect. You know the Medlicotts? Oh, don't you? Well, you'll enjoy meeting them. Medlicott Hall is a great place, and they always give us a capital do on this annual occasion. Rose Medlicott is . . ."

But what Rose Medlicott was John was not to know at this moment, for there was a stir in the crowd.

"You'd better get back to your men," said Falconer urgently. "The show's just going to start."

As the Mayor and Aldermen of Loam with various prominent Loamshire figures including old Lord Warburton and Squire Medlicott appeared on the crimson-clothed dais outside the town hall the sun burst through the grey February clouds with something like the ardour of spring.

"Present arms!"

There was a flourish of trumpets. 'Edward the Seventh by the Grace of God, King of Great Britain and Ireland and of the British Dominions beyond the Sea . . .

Emperor of India . . . Defender of the Faith. . . .' John was too much preoccupied by the need of carrying out his own part in the pomp to observe the omission of 'and First' in the King's title, and there was no susceptible Scot in this heart of rural England to protest against the twentieth-century insult to William Wallace. As it was, the ceremony exhilarated him. At the Queen's funeral he had been aware of history in the making, but there he had been a spectator. On this occasion he was an actor. By asserting the prestige of the military he could even feel that he had influenced the proceedings.

Back at the Vicarage that evening he asked Mrs Damson about the Medlicotts. Nothing gave her more pleasure than an excuse to expatiate on county families.

"Oh, they are one of our oldest Loamshire families. Mrs Medlicot was a Trotton. The Squire was Master of the Loamshire Hunt until last year. A fine old English gentleman as the song says, though I don't think he is actually yet sixty. But I'm afraid from what I hear that he has lost a good deal of money lately. That's why he gave up the hounds. And they've cut down all their subscriptions to local charities. It's very sad. One hates to see these old families in difficulties. Especially with all this social unrest. Dick Medlicott has just gone into the Hussars, or is it the Lancers? I'm afraid that will be another drain. I always say, Mr Ogilvie, that if only money had never been invented the world would be a much happier place. Well, perhaps Rose will marry well. She certainly is a very sweet girl. She'll be eighteen now. Then there's Ralph. He's at Winchester. Another expense. And then there's Ann, who must be fourteen now. Such a difficult age, but fortunately she's at school. And so

you're going to Medlicott Hall on Saturday? Ah, here's the Vicar. George, Mr Ogilvie is going to Medlicott Hall on Saturday."

"With my company," John added. "We're meeting the Stanstead and Dolby companies there."

"Ah, I've been to some glorious breakfasts at the Hall," Mr Damson sighed. "The Squire was the finest M.F.H. they'll ever see in Loamshire. It was a terrible loss to the county when he gave it up. Well, well, I've given up hunting myself now. *Eheu fugaces* and the rest of it. By the way, Ogilvie, about this idea of yours to read this fellow Ibsen in a German translation. You might come along down to my study and talk it over, will you?"

Down in the Vicar's study the Vicar himself unlocked a small drawer in his bureau and took out a thin booklet bound in pinkish-brown paper.

"I thought when you suggested this for your own reading that it was a very odd suggestion, Ogilvie," he said reproachfully. "But I need hardly say I had no idea, no idea at all that it was this kind of literature."

He held the booklet between his thumb and forefinger, upon his countenance an expression of disgust like that of an old maid who had found a packet of toilet paper beside her chair instead of the *Church Times*.

"There didn't seem any harm in it to me," said John. "Though I thought it was a bit dull."

"Dull? Nothing very dull about a woman who calmly tells her husband that she is going to leave him and her children because, forsooth, she imagines that she has to live her own life. I'm not in the habit of mincing my words, Ogilvie. I ride straight. And in my opinion this play—this *Puppenheim* thing—is a deliberate attack on the

divine institution of Holy Matrimony. Anyway, it's not the kind of literature I care to have read in my study."

John pondered over that study while the Vicar tore up the German translation of *A Doll's House*. Nora's husband would have had just such a study if he had been an English clergyman.

The two painted shields, one with the arms of Cambridge University, the other with the arms of Sidney Sussex College. . . . "*there was a young man of Sid. Sussex who thought that w + x was the same as xx, so they said we won't trouble you to remain any more at Sid. Sussex* . . . the faded photographs of Sidney Sussex men in whiskered groups before the Franco-Prussian War . . . of twenty Sidney Sussex men in striped pillbox caps and baggy white breeches presumably the College Rugby team . . . of an unwrinkled but much heavier George Damson in cap and gown . . . of twelve young men with earnest expressions and fluffy whiskers outside a Victorian gothic window, the students of St Jude's Theological College . . . a large engraving of Holman Hunt's Light of the World, no doubt once upon a time considered an audaciously novel presentation of Christ . . . a large autotype of the Good Shepherd . . . a bad oil-painting of Mrs Damson in a summery dress of the early 'eighties . . . faded photographs of Windermere and Derwentwater commemorating a honeymoon in the English lakes . . . a worn Brussels carpet . . . red flock wallpaper . . . a bookcase of red deal . . . Pearson on the Creed, Westcott on St John, Puller's *Primitive Saints and the See of Rome* . . . a book-rest carved from olive-wood of Gethsemane . . . *The Treasury of Devotion* . . . *Holy Living and Holy Dying* . . . Mrs Damson's trowel

left upon the desk when she put the first daffodils in the Vicar's special Crown Derby vase this morning. . . .

The last scrap of *Nora oder Ein Puppenheim* was by now burnt out. Was it worth such energetic destruction? Mrs Damson would never walk out of this study like Nora.

"I know you didn't realize the nature of that poisonous play when you suggested our reading it together, Ogilvie. And I blame myself for not having been more alive to the nature of the muck with which that Norwegian fellow is flooding the world. However, if you want to read plays in German, and I see your idea in wanting to read conversation, we'd better try something by Schiller."

"There's a modern German dramatist called Gerhard Haupt . . ."

"Now, look here, Ogilvie," the Vicar cut him off, "if you're wise you'll give up this craze for modernity. It's tempting, very tempting to fancy that because a book is modern it must be better than the intellectual pabulum which was good enough for our fathers. I used to think I was modern when I was up at Sidney Sussex. I used to read all the advanced stuff. And what would it seem like now?"

"Pretty old-fashioned, I expect," said John. "And I dare say Ibsen will seem old-fashioned twenty-five years hence."

"Ogilvie, if the time ever comes when that morbid stuff sounds old-fashioned," the Vicar solemnly declared, "it will be a disaster for the human race. No, you misunderstood the point I was trying to make just now. The advanced stuff I used to read would seem rubbish now."

"I'm sure it would," John agreed cordially.

The Vicar looked sharply at his pupil. For a moment his mind was darkened by a suspicion that his leg was being pulled. He did not mistrust clever youths and he did not mistrust good-looking youths, but on the rare occasions when he had come into contact with youths who were at once clever and good-looking he had always mistrusted them profoundly. The combination was unnatural, and the Vicar abhorred anything he considered unnatural. Still, ever since he had spoken to young Ogilvie about attending Matins punctually every morning at eight o'clock the lad had been present, and from what he had heard of him from his brother officers he was well liked. Perhaps he was not trying to pull his leg. Perhaps that frivolous tone of voice in which he had answered just now was the levity of ignorance. Obviously he could not have appreciated the demoralizing influence of that Norwegian play, or he would not have suggested reading it in public. He would have gloated over it in the morbid privacy of his own room.

"Well, Ogilvie, I dare say you think I've been making much ado about nothing, but I have to remember that while you are with me I am responsible to your father, apart from my responsibility as a Christian priest. In my own humble way I try to walk in the footsteps of my Maker."

"Mr Damson, may I ask you a question?"

"By all means," the Vicar replied, composing his countenance to suit what he supposed was to be one of those flirtations with the confessional in which the most staunchly moderate Anglican was not prepared to see any harm. "If there is anything about which you wish to consult me as a priest, my dear boy, do not hesitate. Do not

feel embarrassed. Whatever you wish to tell me is of course under the seal of the con— of confidence."

The Vicar had by now assumed the right attitude and expression in which to listen to and perhaps unravel youth's perplexities. The effect was rather like a doctor waiting for the embarrassing details of an internal complaint.

"What I wanted to ask you was whether you really believed in God?"

"Whether I believe in God?" the Vicar gasped.

'I mean in the conventional religious sense, with all the rest . . . for instance, do you believe in the Apostles' Creed literally?"

"Do I believe in the Apostles' Creed? Are you trying to be insolent, Ogilvie?"

"Of course not, padre. It's a question that one asks oneself and in asking oneself one asks it about other people."

The Vicar's brow cleared. He had been reassured by John's addressing him as padre, and thus granting his office the respect of men of the world, a respect for one whom they recognized as different from but by no means apart from themselves. A gratifying development of late years had been the obviously increasing affection of the laity for the clergy. It did not occur to the Reverend George Damson that affection may often be a good-natured manifestation of contempt.

"But why ask such a question, my dear fellow? Isn't that the fundamental mistake? The moment we begin asking ourselves questions we are attacking our own faith."

"But didn't you ever ask yourself questions?" John pressed.

"Not from the moment I made up my mind to take Holy Orders."

"Have you ever had any kind of personal assurance that what you believe is true?"

"Personal assurance? I'm afraid I don't quite follow you, Ogilvie."

John related his experience with Mr Herbert Wilbraham in the train coming south; but he said nothing about his own appeal for faith in the train from Liverpool Street to Loam, for in questioning the Vicar he was more concerned to gratify curiosity than to search for the help and guidance of spiritual counsel.

"Rule that kind of thing right out," advised Mr Damson stoutly. "Rule it right out, Ogilvie. These emotional excitements are derogatory to the dignity of Almighty God." The phrase was irresistible. Mr Damson scribbled it down on the back of his tailor's bill. It must certainly be used in a sermon when the Dissenters were being tiresome.

"Still it is very strange that God doesn't make things a little bit easier. I can't see why somebody who believes blindly is better than the man who demands proof."

"What about our Lord's answer to St Thomas?"

"Yes, and I've been puzzled by that answer since I started thinking a bit about religion. It seems to put a very high premium on credulity. What is to tell us when faith ends and credulity begins?"

"Surely the answer to that is simple enough. The Bible."

"But what guarantees the truth of the Bible?"

"The inspiration of Almighty God."

"But isn't that a kind of mental living by taking in each other's washing?"

"Ogilvie, Ogilvie, that is almost a blasphemous comparison," declared the Vicar reproachfully.

"Well, do you believe all that's in the Bible?"

"Emphatically I do, though of course not always literally. We must accept some of it as symbolical. Science has made great strides, and we Christians must take advantage of what we believe to be God's glorious gift of increased knowledge to humanity."

"Yes, that's all very well; but if God is going to allow all our old-fashioned notions to be swept away, why doesn't He reinforce our faith proportionately?"

"Isn't it a little presumptuous for a young man of eighteen to doubt God's infinite wisdom?"

"It certainly would be if God had ever given me any assurance of His existence," John argued. "But you must admit, Mr Damson, that it's much less easy nowadays to believe than it was in the Middle Ages."

"It was much less easy in the Middle Ages for men to believe than it was when our Lord walked the earth. And yet even in Jerusalem there were more men who disbelieved than men who believed."

John would have liked to tell the Vicar that he found him far less convincing than a Cockney singing-girl in a Swiss café concert or a beefy man with a walrus moustache and a Lancashire accent in a railway-carriage, to go further indeed and openly impute to his arguments a debilitated professionalism as their basis; but he knew that such an imputation would merely strike the older man as a piece of youthful insolence, and he abstained. After all why should he expect spiritual guidance from a man to whom he was not prepared to grant even the mental courtesy of recognizing his sincerity?

"It's this paralysing silence of God," he sighed at last. "I expect you feel a little overcome by that sometimes, don't you?"

"We parsons often feel overcome, but we go plodding on," the Vicar replied. "Anyway, of one thing you may be sure, God understands our difficulties better than we can ever hope to understand them ourselves. And now what about bed?"

The Reverend George Damson yawned. He had had a tiring day since he had hurried along the gravel path from the Vicarage to the church to don his surplice and say Morning Prayer. There had been that egg-bound Minorca hen which had kept him busy after breakfast. There had been that trouble between Mrs Hobbins and Mrs Pennycook over Mrs Pennycook's alleged statement to Mrs Gash that Mrs Hobbins's daughter Annie was going to have a baby, which Mrs Hobbins, with an unpleasant wealth of physical details, had declared to be impossible and therefore a slanderous statement for which she was entitled to have the law of Mrs Pennycook, who was equally anxious to have the law of Mrs Gash for repeating to Mrs Hobbins something which she, Mrs Pennycook, had never so much as breathed even to Mr Pennycook. There had been a most discouraging response from his three pupils to a general knowledge paper he had set them, and there had been the problem of deciding whether it was not his duty to write to their parents and urge that the sooner they were removed from his tuition and sent out to the colonies the more truly economical it would be for the parents. There had been that uncomfortable business at Greengorse Farm over that half-witted lad in the farmyard and . . . he hoped that the police were

not going to take the matter up. The wretched boy was more fit for the asylum than the jail. Then he had bicycled into Loam, only to arrive two minutes after the accession of King Edward had been proclaimed. Several of his brother clergy had chaffed him. There had always been a slight jealousy over his riding to hounds, although he had not hunted now for five years. 'You haven't learnt to manage the humble bicycle yet,' that effeminate extremist Archbutt had sneered, and there had been a general guffaw. Jealousy, just common or garden jealousy. They resented his taking pupils and having private means. And that play he had looked through after tea so as to be able to do something for young Ogilvie, who after all deserved a little attention. A most uncomfortable play. Sordid. That was the kind of thing they called realism. No wonder young people were beginning to have religious doubts. However, luckily nobody had read it except himself.

"Oh, by the way, Ogilvie, you had a copy of that Puppenheim thing, too," he said aloud. "I hope you'll destroy it."

John hesitated . . . oh, well, it would please the old boy.

"It's up in my room, Vicar. I'll fetch it down."

"No, no, I trust you absolutely. Just destroy it yourself."

The Reverend George Damson yawned again.

"I'm off to bed. If you're going to join the others in the . . ."

"No, I'm tired myself," said John quickly.

"I was vexed at missing the proclamation. Well, you'll enjoy Medlicott Hall on Saturday week. March the

ninth, eh? Well time certainly does fly." Here at least was a statement uttered with profound conviction. "Will you put out the lamp, Ogilvie? Thanks."

The Vicar yawned his way upstairs, John close behind him.

"Good night. A bit chilly to-night. There's a touch of east in the wind, I fancy."

Doctor Meade was not well enough to take command on that Saturday, when at two o'clock A Company paraded outside the drill-hall with rolled greatcoats, haversacks and water-bottles. It was a good turn out, for this march to Paxford was a favourite event, the beer at the Green Man Inn being renowned for its depth and potency. The weather was favourable, the sky a pale cloudless blue and the wind blowing keenly across the freshly ploughed fields and setting the young lambs skipping in the pastures. Yet winter was not out of sight by a long way. The companies of twittering hen linnets had not broken up. The rose upon the breast of their future mates would be deeper before they did.

"Looks like being a nice seasonable spring, sir," Colour-sergeant Capstick observed to his commanding officer. "Very good turn out, sir. Eighty-one. Paxford's a very pretty village."

"I've not been there yet," John told him.

"Have you not, sir? Well, I've heard it said more than once that Paxford's the prettiest village in Loamshire. And Medlicott Hall's a very nice place. On the old-

fashioned side of course, but a lot of people like that. I think if I was you, sir, with all respect, I'd give the order to march easy now. The Company came through Loam very smart. A company of regulars couldn't have come through smarter. Pity we couldn't have had the band with us."

When the men had settled down to their tramp of eleven miles, Sergeant Capstick returned to John's side.

"Pity Captain Meade wasn't up to this march. He'll want to be careful, though, for a bit. He's had a nasty turn by what I hear. Seems funny for a doctor to be ill, I always think. Still, there you are, they're only flesh and blood like what we are ourselves. Yes, we all enjoy this Paxford march. Squire Medlicott gave us a lovely spread last year in the parish hall. Worked it in two batches, they did, with the three companies."

"By the way, Colour-sergeant, will you see that the men have a pint apiece with me."

"I will, sir, certainly, sir. Thank you, sir. They'll enjoy that. Mr Hipkins, the landlord of the Green Man, always has some lovely barrels. Beautiful stuff. There'll be a good deal drunk by our fellows and the Dolby fellows and the Stanstead fellows. But the twelve-mile tramp home will soon take that out of the system. You'll be getting a good supper yourself, sir. The officers all go up to the Hall, and the Squire takes a regular delight in doing them well. I don't suppose we'll start back a minute before nine, if then. Last year we didn't see the clock in the Market Square till half-past two in the morning. Some of the men's wives was a bit crabbed about it, and in fact one or two of them was actually waiting by the drill-hall, and what they didn't call the

Volunteers! Volunteering's really more for bachelors. Well, a girl likes to see her young man in scarlet. You know. She feels she's got something, as they say. But after she's married she don't seem to care what he's in. I suppose any woman who's seen her man in a nightshirt about six o'clock of a winter's morning knows what a humbug clothes are, though me being a tailor I oughtn't to say so. But anyway, a woman once she's married sets her face against anything that gives men an excuse for getting out. Doesn't matter what it is. Volunteering, freemasonry, or bowls, and I dare say if it comes to that the Salvation Army."

As if to give the lie to such cynicism the men struck up with Rosie O'Grady:

“Sweet Rosie O’Grady,
My beautiful Rose,
She’s my little lady,
As everyone knows.

And when we are married,
How happy we’ll be!
For I love sweet Rosie O’Grady,
And Rosie O’Grady loves me.”

“Yes,” Sergeant Capstick observed, “but when he *has* married her and she’s been through his pockets once or twice he won’t think her quite so much of a little lady. All the same, perhaps I’m not the one to say so, sir, because me and Mrs Capstick couldn’t have got on better not if we’d never have married at all.”

So in talk and songs and the tramp of feet the time passed, and just after sunset A Company reached Paxford, five minutes after D Company from Stanstead, with Captain Henry Falconer in command and a red-haired round-faced subaltern, Tom Pownall, the son of another

landowner in the neighbourhood who was learning to inherit a property by acting as his father's agent. Five minutes after the Loam men F Company from Dolby with Captain Pledge and two subalterns, Fleming and Rickaby, marched on to the village green.

Pledge was a dapper little man in the mid-thirties, one of the partners of Pledge's, the big port people, who lived in a large house on the western border of the county and was mad about motor-cars. Fleming, the senior subaltern in the battalion after Howes, who was in South Africa, was a partner in an old family brewery at Dolby, and Rickaby was the son of a prosperous lawyer in the same place.

All his fellow-officers made themselves most agreeable to John, who as the junior remained behind to see the men settled at their tea while the others walked on up to the Medlicotts.

By the time John reached the precincts of the Hall by a short cut guaranteed to save him five minutes, dusk was deepening through sapphire into night and a half-moon was hanging serenely above that architectural mixture of a house, Elizabethan, Caroline, Georgian, and Regency. After getting lost among the stables at the back he asked a groom for fresh directions and was advised to go round through the garden, the door to which in a high brick wall was opened for him. Presently John found himself on a great lawn, in the middle of which was the stooping figure of a girl. He looked round for a path by taking which he might avoid the embarrassment of explaining to her who he was and why he was here, but the garden descended in terraces toward darkling trees, and in the uncertain light he dreaded further complications. So he

kept on across the lawn, and as he drew near to the stooping girl he saw that she was picking daffodils. She was so much absorbed in her task that John was within five yards of her before she heard the creaking of his accoutrements and jumped up.

"I say, I'm awfully sorry for disturbing you, but I was given a short cut and I think I made rather a muddle of it."

"The others are in the house," she said, and if the half-moon riding over the top of the Hall had spoken to him John would not have found her voice more silver-sweet.

"I know. I had to stay behind a few minutes and see that the men were properly settled. My name's John Ogilvie. I'm one of the subalterns of the Loam Company, the junior subaltern."

"And I'm Rose Medlicott."

Ah, what avails the sceptred race!

Ah, what the form divine!

What every virtue, every grace!

'Rose Aylmer, all were thine.

Rose Aylmer, whom these watchful eyes

May weep, but never see,

A night of memories and sighs

I consecrate to thee.

It takes eight lines to write it, but John thought the whole of that lyric in the momentary silence which succeeded the telling of her name.

"And you're picking daffodils," was what in his own opinion he most idiotically said.

"Yes, they're marvellously early this spring. Mother wanted some for her room, and I'd forgotten to pick them for her."

"I'll help you," John exclaimed with enthusiasm, bending over to grab at the dewy trumpets.

She laughed.

"You can't possibly pick daffodils in uniform. Besides, I've picked enough now. Come along, and I'll escort you safely indoors."

It was in an empty lamplit drawing-room into which she led him through a french-window that they stopped and looked at one another, neither of them deliberately, but both driven by an impulse of emotion beyond their mastery.

It was a large room with a high heavily corniced ceiling and five tall french-windows curtained with faded blue damask. Above the floriated and foliated mantelpiece of white marble was a great gilt mirror which apparently doubled the size of the room, and holding in its reflection the bluish-grey wallpaper seemed to give a sensation of an abode beneath the sea, so that the very ornaments were as the shell and corals of the ocean's floor.

She stood there in a blue dress to which the live blue of her eyes gave a powdery pastel look. She was holding to her heart the daffodils she had gathered, and all their yellow was dull beside that glinting light-brown hair rolled back over a pompadour. And for John even the scarlet of his sleeve as he raised an arm to take off his helmet lost all effect of intense colour when he watched her carnation cheeks.

They could not have stood there more than two or three seconds; but when from the world without, beyond, above this deep-sea silence came a burst of remote laughter, they thought they must have been standing here for long minutes and both started in confusion, she dropping a

daffodil or two, he a glove. Both stooped quickly to regain what they had let fall, and thus their heads came close together. John could feel the flame of her blush, he fancied.

"I don't know why I dropped those daffodils," she said foolishly, for there was but one thing she could have said which would not have sounded foolish at that moment.

"I don't know why I never met you before," said John.

"Do you live here?"

"Fifteen miles away at Milbourne. I'm at the Vicarage there."

"I think we ought to go along to the dining-room," she said, no doubt unaware that she sighed in saying it.

He followed her along a primly proportioned Georgian corridor into a winding Tudor passage to the front hall, where she left him to the services of a footman, who when John had divested himself of sword and Sam Browne, of haversack, water-bottle, and rolled greatcoat, brought him to the dining-room where among the scarlet of his brother officers, the crimson of Mrs Medlicott's gown, and the purple of the Squire's countenance he saw Rose like a vivid blossom in a drift of dead leaves.

"This is the infant of His Majesty's Auxiliary Forces, Squire," announced Falconer.

"Jolly glad to welcome you," the host barked. "Come and sit down. I hear Rosie found you wandering like a lost hound and brought you safely into the kennel. Come along now, and swallow some soup. You've had a good tramp, and you've another good tramp before you, don't forget."

John was too late to find a place beside Rose, which took a great deal of the savour from the excellent soup; but

he was fortunately opposite to her, and that brought some of it back again.

After supper, well primed with champagne, John felt optimistic about getting a *tête-à-tête* with Rose; but alas, Pledge and Falconer began to talk about the necessity of moving off at once, and John, although he might be in command of A Company, did not feel that he could stay behind without the other commanding officers. When they were putting on their accoutrements in the hall, he pondered which part of his equipment could be most easily left behind in order to provide him with an excuse to call back at the Hall very soon. For a moment he considered leaving his sword, for that would certainly be a sufficiently important item to justify calling back for it even as soon as to-morrow. In the end he decided to abandon his water-bottle.

The men, who had drunk plenty of the Green Man's beer, sang for the first four miles of the march home without a pause. Then they grew sleepy, and there was no sound except the tramp-tramp of eighty pairs of boots between the hedgerows.

Sergeant Capstick was chattering, but John did not hear what he was saying. The moon was company enough, sailing beside him over copse and spinney, a mirror for his dreams.

Rose Aylmer, all were thine!

The clock in the Market Square struck the half-hour of midnight as A Company marched into Loam, but it was nearly two before John reached the Vicarage, for he had a puncture a few hundred yards from the drill-hall and had to walk his machine all the way to Milbourne.

He did not mind the fatigue after marching twenty-four miles in heavy equipment. Thoughts of Rose Medlicott carried him like wings.

But by Sunday morning the wings had moulted to nothing. The water-bottle he had left behind as an excuse to revisit the Hall now seemed a most inadequate reason for calling there so soon as to-morrow. Moreover, when he had recovered the water-bottle, what would give him an excuse to return? One could not appear casually at a large country house fifteen miles away every other day of the week, and the best he could hope for was an invitation to—to what? Tennis would not begin for weeks yet. John racked his fancy to discover some reason for frequenting the Paxford country. If it were late in the year he might have made a passionate desire to capture a purple-emperor an excuse for frequenting the Paxford woods, which were a recognized haunt of that butterfly. Even the birds would not be nesting yet awhile, and an alleged anxiety to discover a nightingale's nest would not serve him for a long time. He asked the Vicar just before church if hounds were meeting again at Paxford before the season finished, and heard with a grateful emotion akin to rapture that they were meeting there next Thursday.

*O all ye works of the Lord, bless ye the Lord,
Praise Him and magnify Him for ever.*

John's fellow-pupils gazed at him in astonishment to hear the fervour of his singing of the Lenten *Benedicite* at Morning Prayer, and never did the twenty-five minutes of the Vicar's badly read sermon go by so swiftly as they went by that Sunday morning to thoughts of Rose.

The next day John set out after lunch to recover his water-bottle.

"But it's a disgusting day for a long bicycle ride," the Vicar pointed out. "This east wind's enough to cut one in half. Why didn't you write a note and get them to send it into Loam by the carrier?"

"Well, you see, I'm not absolutely certain that I did leave it at the Medlicotts. I might have left it in the village hall when I was fussing about the men. The wind won't be too bad. I shall have it sideways most of the time."

"If you're really going over to the Medlicotts, Mr Ogilvie," said Mrs Damson, coming into the hall at that moment, "I wish you'd take a message from me to Rose."

"Of course, I will, Mrs Damson," John answered in what he hoped did not sound too much like a shout of exultation.

"I'm having a preliminary meeting of helpers for our bazaar and sale of work in May for the organ fund, and if she could spare the time to come over, it would be so kind and helpful. Mrs Medlicott has been good enough to promise to take a stall, but I don't want to bother her yet awhile."

"No, of course you don't," John agreed.

"So I thought that perhaps Rose would deputize for her at this preliminary meeting; but there's no real need for her to come if it's in the least inconvenient."

"I'll tell her that," said John, already composing in his mind the invitation, which did he know anything about persuasiveness, would suggest that if Rose Medlicott did find it inconvenient it would practically mean the abandonment of the bazaar for this year.

The east wind was searing, but for all John cared it might have been the balmiest zephyr. *To Much Barton,*

Spuraway, Paxford, Gayfield, Stanstead said the first signpost. Much Barton and Spuraway were left behind. *To Paxford, Gayfield, Stanstead* said another signpost. *To Paxford* said the left arm of a third signpost. Who cared what the right arm said?

"Did I by any chance leave a water-bottle here on Saturday?" John enquired cunningly at the Green Man. "No? Perhaps I left it in the village hall. Who has the key? Mrs Middleditch? The third cottage on the right past the church? Thank you so much. . . . I'm sorry to bother you, but did you happen to notice a water-bottle I think I left behind in the village hall last Saturday?"

Mrs Middleditch, a massive woman engaged with the Monday washing, wiped her hands and offered to open the hall for John to have a look round.

"Though I was giving it a tidy-up this morning and I didn't see nothing of no water-bottle."

"I'm sorry to be such a nuisance, but perhaps if you wouldn't mind . . ."

"No nuisance at all, sir," Mrs Middleditch declared, and after giving a dab with the palm of her hand to the three black-headed hatpins which fastened an old cap of her husband's to her thinning hair and throwing over her shoulders a tippet of worn fur, she unhooked the key and led the way toward the hall.

"There's a nasty bite in the wind to-day, isn't there? But there you are, what else can we expect in March? My eldest girl's laid up with the tonsillitis. Can't hardly swallow a morsel of soup, and that's made my washing a bit stingy this week. No, I certainly don't remember seeing no hot-water bottle laying around. Was it one of these rubber ones?"

John explained its military appearance.

"Well, I think they enjoyed themselves on Saturday all right, though the last thing any of 'em would have missed would have been a water-bottle. Mr Hipkins says the beer they drunk really frightened him. Well all this soldiering might seem a waste of time to some people, but what I say is 'let everybody enjoy themselves'. I've got a nephew of my sister's out in this South African mess-up at this very moment. Been out there six months he has and never seen a Bore yet by what I can hear. The Squire was at me the other day for our Jim to join these Vollingteers, but as I said to my husband, I said, 'What's the use in him biking over to Stanstead just to spend his wages on racketing about Stanstead?'"

John smiled at the notion of racketing about the sleepy little country town of Stanstead.

"Ah, you're laughing. But that's the way with the young folk nowadays. Laugh at everything, they does."

By this time they had reached the village hall, where John made a pretence of looking for his water-bottle.

"Not here, I'm afraid."

He pressed half a crown into Mrs Middleditch's hand still warm and moist from her washing.

"Perhaps I left it up at Medlicott Hall."

"Ah, you was up there, was you? Then depend on it that's just where it is. Miss Rose was through the village not ten minutes ago. She'll be back home by now."

John felt very much inclined to press another half-crown into Mrs Middleditch's hand, before he mounted his bicycle and rode on to Medlicott Hall.

The pile seemed larger than by the moonlight on

Saturday. Each separate architectural addition was a house in itself, a house with a long history, a house which it was impossible to imagine being built, a house which had grown from this Loamshire earth like the very oaks themselves. As John bicycled slowly up the drive through the park he thought how absurd it was not to recognize the impossibility of swaying the people who lived in houses like that, and almost in the same instant what an indomitable force it must be in Ireland which in hundreds of years had made such houses as this inconceivable there and which had caught up the would-be residents in such houses, its self-supposing conquerors, and turned them into comedians or lunatics. And then, oh fortune! Rose came walking down a wooded path to join the main drive, the two deerhounds with her rushing forward to bark at the stranger.

"I'm afraid I'm being rather a bore, but I think I left my water-bottle at the Hall on Saturday night."

"I say you'll come in and have tea, won't you?"

Two banal sentences, two large dogs, a bicycle, a young woman in a Harris tweed coat and skirt of smoky blue, a young man in a suit of Donegal tweed, an English park through which the March wind was chasing far and wide the dead leaves which the winter had left in damp drifts, half of those leaves imponderable now as cobwebs. No more than that. Yet the young woman and the young man felt as if they had been whirled round the globe by that wind in the instant of meeting and dropped again upon this still dislusted wintry grass to find the spot from which they had started a flamy green paradise in which they were burning together in a delectable fire.

"Then it was love at first sight," John heard himself

say in a voice which seemed to himself as dry and feeble as a twig fretting against a window-pane.

"It must have been," she whispered.

"Rose!" he cried, ravished by the tremulous confidence of her voice, and when he leaned forward in eager gratitude he pressed upon the bell of his bicycle, the sudden shrilling of which so far from affronting the solemnity of this moment proclaimed the solemnity of it like a sacring-bell.

"I always thought love at first sight was impossible," Rose avowed.

"It is very rare," she was assured by incarnate experience.

They looked at each other in silence, their eyes luminous as the secret jewel they had discovered together. The two dogs discerning one of those strange human withdrawals from the matter in hand collapsed patiently on the grass and gazed at the lovers over their paws.

"Rudy and Speed are feeling hurt," she told him, and the two dogs confirmed her statement by thumping their tails.

"Did you think about me after I had gone?" he asked.

"Yes, I did."

"What did you think?"

"I thought I loved you."

"Did you think I would come to-day?"

"Well, no, but I thought how lovely it would be if you did."

"As a matter of fact I left my water-bottle behind on purpose."

"Yes, that was a good idea. You couldn't very well

tell my family that you had come tearing over from Milbourne because you had fallen in love with me."

John frowned. He was again at the mercy of that hideous incubus called youth.

That night when he got back to the Vicarage he wrote a letter to Miriam Stern :

MILBOURNE VICARAGE,
LOAMSHIRE
March 11th, 1901.

My dear Mrs Stern,

I promised you last summer in Fontainebleau that I would tell you when anything really serious happened to me. Well, something very serious has happened. I have fallen madly in love at first sight with a girl called Rose Medlicott who is the eldest daughter of some people who have a large house and a good deal of land at Paxford about 15 miles from where I am living with this coach. She is eighteen and a half years old, exactly the same age as myself all but three days. Descriptions aren't very satisfactory, but she has very bright light brown hair and a marvellous complexion with vivid blue eyes, the most vivid blue eyes I ever saw. Not dark or light, but the colour of lapis lazuli is as near as I can get to it.

I only saw Rose for the first time on Saturday evening, and to-day I rode over to Medlicott Hall and met her in the park by good luck and told her at once that I loved her. So you can imagine that I must

have felt pretty sure of myself. As a matter of fact I seemed to be driven by some impulse quite outside myself. You will shake your head and remind me about that girl Connie Fenwick a year ago. Well, I'm not going to scoff at that love, because I undoubtedly was in love with her as far as I could be in love then. But Connie was not in love with me. She looked upon me as a more or less agreeable youth whose admiration was worth having as long as there was nobody serious. Rose is in love with me. You must believe I know what I am saying when I tell you that. If you saw her you would admit at once that a girl like her could not tell me that she loved me the instant I told her and after we hadn't had ten minutes alone together since we met, unless she did love.

I asked her if she had ever thought she cared for anybody else and she told me that until she had met me, apart from her family, she had only cared for dogs and horses. She's not in the least sentimental or silly in any way. She doesn't care particularly for poetry or music or anything artistic, except a little for painting. In fact she's a typical English girl except that there is a kind of fairylike quality in her sporting tastes, as if the world of horses and dogs were her natural element to which she had to return from time to time. She's mad about the house they live in, and it is a wonderful house, a kind of epitome of the England of four hundred years. And what seems to me the most convincing proof of this love of mine is that all the discontent I felt with England has vanished. I realize in loving Rose that I love England. I understand the difference between myself and that friend of mine Fitzgerald whom Emil disliked so

much. I see now that I am really rooted here. You know that for some time now at the back of my mind I've been supposing that my mission in life was to ruffle the Celtic fringe in the company of people like Fitzgerald, but the fact that I can fall in love with somebody so essentially English as Rose proves to me that I could never have embarked upon that mission with the fanaticism one ought to have for any business like that. So I may as well give up dreams which I had no overmastering impulse to turn into realities.

In spite of the emotion, I feel extraordinarily at peace with the world. I know I can't expect her family to recognize anything like a formal engagement, and it will be October, 1903, before I am twenty-one. Still, I think in a year we might hope to be engaged and we think we ought to be able to get married in three years and six months. I shall have about four hundred a year of my own. Of course her family may think me inelegible. Mrs Medlicott I can't altogether make out. She is a handsome woman of about forty, but she has a curious coldness. I don't mean that she was particularly cold to me. She seemed to me just as cold with everybody else. She's one of those thin-lipped well-bred English-women who have become accepted as typical. I see nothing of Rose in her except the intensely blue eyes, which in Mrs Medlicott are hard, almost the texture as well as the colour of lapis lazuli. The Squire is about ten years older than his wife—a bluff boisterous fox-hunting squire such as you might put on the stage. Rose has a sister at school. Her elder brother is in the 17th Hussars and her other brother is still at Winchester. So you see, I have gone the whole hog in my

surrender to convention in my choice of a family of which I hope one day to become a member.

I haven't tried to do any writing since I have been at Milbourne, but I have done a good deal of reading. You remember that you advised me to read Ibsen. Well, I thought that as I'm supposed to read a certain amount of German with this tutor it would be a good notion to read a German translation of Ibsen. I've no interest in German beyond knowing enough to ask for the necessities of life if I ever put foot in the beastly country which I don't expect I ever shall. We started with the Doll's House, but Damson's conventional mind was badly upset by it, and a solemn auto da fe was held in which the offending volume (it was a small paper-backed affair) was burnt. It was an odd effect on one to be brought up against that kind of mind. It was like trying to see the point of view of some prehistoric beast. How anybody could conceivably be shocked by the Doll's House is unimaginable. Yet this Church of England parson was genuinely shocked by it. 'That kind of thing strikes at the very root of family life', he told me.

I tried to carry the war into the enemy's territory by asking him if he really believed all he publicly professed to believe when he was officiating in church. Do these people believe? It seems to me that if they did they could not be content with such a tepid response from the creatures for whom they have elected to be made spiritually responsible. I can't help feeling that most of our peculiarly English religion is less a creed than a code of good manners, supported by the people at the top as what they consider an example. You're always hearing English

people talking about setting a good example. I've been reading lately one or two books by Catholic writers, and I must say it's a relief to get away from this good example business and find an insistence upon personal responsibility to a positive creed. It's not surprising to find the social agitator thinking that organized religion is the enemy of the oppressed classes for which in my opinion a better word would be 'suppressed'. It's the knocking out of the individual that I hate about the progress of what is fancied to be an increasingly prosperous world. And it is the comparative liberty of behaviour subject to an unfree opinion which attracts me about Catholicism. That seems to me a much truer expression of the purpose of God than liberty of opinion with behaviour in chains. I'd rather act as I like in accord with a rule of thought than think as I like in accord with a rule of action.

Yet in spite of what you will be thinking is my mental unsettlement the only positive belief I have at this moment is that if I could persuade my father to let me have my money now and if I could persuade Rose's father and mother to let me marry Rose at once I could happily live the rest of my life with her. What if other people did consider that to be vegetating? I would not be vegetating, because it isn't in me to vegetate. If I could contribute as much to English literature as Gilbert White of Selborne I should be more than justified in the choice I had made. That wouldn't be vegetating. I think that my writing to you like this will be a proof to you that I have gone through a tremendous experience. I'm not such an egotistical fool as to suppose that because it is I who have fallen in love that fact possesses a special emotional value. I just want to tell the only

person I know who I hope will be willing to believe me that since I met Rose Medlicott 48 hours ago I have gone through a change that must be the same kind of change people undergo when they experience 'conversion'.

If it had been conversion in the religious sense the way to express it would have been clear enough, but who is going to recognize conversion through love? I realize that it will be regarded by everybody as youthful folly, and that nobody will take us seriously. There is no possible way for us to get married. Even if we had the courage to do so we could be separated legally. It's most improbable that even an engagement would be accepted by other people. And this seems to me wrong. There must be some driving force behind the emotion in me which if naturally encouraged would be valuable. It ought not to be allowed to wither slowly and be looked back upon when I am thirty like measles or whooping-cough. After all, this kind of experience does not happen to everybody. And love at first sight, which now I know, is not just an overwhelming physical desire. When I was attracted by Connie my one idea was to express it in a kiss. I have not even thought about kissing Rose. But if I go on I shall become incoherent, and anyway this letter is much too long.

I saw in the 'Standard' this morning a splendid notice of Julius's concert on Saturday. I am so glad. And tell Emil that I know I owe him a letter, but that I've had nothing to write about except volunteering which he'd hate to read about. I couldn't write to him about Rose, because if he did not respond to my sensitive condition of mind over her I'm afraid I should never forgive him. So it's wisest to take no risks.

*Forgive me for being a bore and inflicting this screed
upon you.*

*With love,
Your devoted
John Ogilvie*

John had contemplated a letter to his stepmother, in which he would challenge her capacity for sympathy; but the long letter to Mrs Stern had exhausted him, and on reading it through before sealing it up in the envelope he found it so inadequate an expression of his state of mind that he abandoned the notion of writing to Elise.

However, in the morning he himself received a letter from Elise:

98 CHURCH Row,
HAMPSTEAD,
N.W.
March 11th, 1901.

My dear John,

This is to inform you that I expect to present you with either a half-brother or a half-sister next September. I hope you won't mind very much. Your father has taken the news philosophically. But to be serious, I do want you very much not to mind.

*Loving
Elise*

When this child was his own age, John thought, his

father would be sixty-five, a very very old man. And he himself would be old enough, close upon thirty-seven! Would he be living with Rose in that magical small house and large garden in the heart of the country, saying with Horace, *hoc erat in votis?* He sat down to write and assure Elise how glad her news had made him, and as a proof he confided in her about Rose.

Elise wrote back :

Dearest John,

It was sweet of you to write as you did. Be sure, that I shall love your Rose. She sounds enchanting. You didn't suggest that I should say anything about her to your father, and perhaps, his legal mind being apt to look at things rather differently from romantic scatterbrains like you and me, it would be better not to say anything to him for the moment. But be sure that if you stand in need of support I shall support you. Advice is a dull thing, but I think if I were you I would see how things go this spring before you begin to talk about an engagement. It's no good pretending that older people are sensible, because they are not, and I feel convinced that no older people will agree that the future can be settled on the strength of two young people meeting twice. I'm sure you'll see this yourself. You know and she knows and I am feeling so happy at the moment that I know you and Rose would live happily ever afterwards, but I think we'll have to consider ourselves exceptional.

My blessings to you and your Rose.

*Loving
Elise*

Miriam Stern's reply arrived:

21 CLAREMOUNT GARDENS,
HAMPSTEAD,
N.W.

March 13th, 1901.

My dear John,

I am proud you should have written to me as you did. When women grow near to forty they are apt to be flattered by the frankness of the young. And I know that's exactly what you don't want to be reminded that you are at the moment, because you are still young enough to feel youth like a deformity. Still, in justice to poor despised youth you must remember that unless you were young you could not have had that wonderful wonderful experience. Whatever your actual age you would have to be young for that. And I'm inclined to think that beloved by the gods you will die young, even though you should be a hundred years old when you leave this world.

The only doubt your letter leaves in my mind is if you with this wondering much more whether this world is a prelude to another world than whether swallows ever hibernate, which as I remember was the problem that vexed Gilbert White most, whether you, dear John, will be quite so content as you think even to allow an appearance of vegetating. If you and your Rose could be as static as the lovers of the Grecian Urn, why then, yes. But you cannot be, and it would be a terrible thing for her if you should suddenly wake up one day and find out that your creative desire was leading you beyond the quiet ways of Gilbert White. At the risk of losing your friendship, John, and I do not suppose

you realize even faintly how much that friendship means to me, I shall beseech you to guard against disaster by assuming for a while that you are just like any other young man who falls in love with a beautiful girl. Discipline cannot destroy what is really vital. If you are a creative artist, and you may be, you will one day experience inspiration. In one flashing moment you will conceive the whole of a work of art, but if you suppose that you can give enduring form to that conception except by the most arduous discipline you will not be a true creative artist, but an artistic dreamer. I'm sure I don't have to argue that with you.

Now, love as love has come to you is very like inspiration, and if you intend to make anything of it you must not expect outsiders to surrender to what they are bound to consider your self-indulgence. When somebody like myself who has lived almost entirely with artists all her life hears any demand for recognition before accomplishment she is apt to be sceptical. I have heard about so many masterpieces which never got beyond a blank sheet of foolscap, and the creators of those masterpieces never failed to find me prosaic and material because I would not accept the intention as the equivalent of the achievement. So please, John, do not throw this letter down in a rage because you think you misjudged my imagination. I do accept with absolute faith that you have had a transcendent experience which is granted to very few, but my scepticism fostered by the life I have led and the company I have kept compels me to add 'Yes, and what are you going to make of it?' And I must be honest with myself and you, and add still a second question which touches me more nearly and that is 'What is she going to make of you?'

There is a danger, you know, in doing as you are doing and concentrating at your age all the aspirations of youth on an ideal embodied in a single woman. And remember, it's you yourself who supplied me with that criticism when you told me that falling in love with your Rose had put out of your head your 'mission to ruffle the Celtic fringe'. Not that I want you to involve yourself in political adventures. I have seen too much misery from that in Poland. But I'm not sure that you will be content presently at having sacrificed your beliefs so readily. The completeness with which you have thrown them over for this English idyll is a little disquieting to me. Have you really considered the future? I do not suppose for an instant that her father or your father will agree to your getting married at once. Obviously they will not. Very well, then, you are faced with an interminable engagement, and you must remember that this will place a steadily increasing physical strain on both of you. You next October will be going to Oxford, and whatever you may think now you must change very rapidly during the next three or four years. I am not going to prophesy that this change will involve a change in your feelings for Rose; but though you may love her, as you think, just as devotedly, you will not love her in the same way. The ecstasy cannot endure. It's not conceivable that it should. Therefore I entreat you not at any rate yet awhile to consider marriage or an engagement. Love your Rose, but in loving her be content to be grateful to fortune for giving you at your age a grande passion. Our modern education does not tend to encourage these great passions of youth, but once upon a time we thought they were the very breath of poetry.

But, John, do think of it as a grande passion of youth. Enjoy it with an awareness all the while of its transiency. What folly to write so! Would it be a grande passion if you did not believe it immortal? I'm afraid I'm letting you down badly. Perhaps I'm jealous. I ought to be proud that you confided in me, and here I am reading you a lecture like a maiden aunt. Yet if Emil could fall in love with an English Rose like yours and be loved by her as I'm sure sure sure that she loves you, I should be happy beyond words. And if Julius could fall in love with an English Rose four years hence I would be even happier. So isn't it perverse of me to be demurring over your doing it? I think that nobody less than the Queen of Elfland would please me for you. I'm ungrateful! I'm ungrateful! That you should have chosen me for your confidante shows I have been able to give you something. Women are odious as a sex. Yes, John, I'm afraid they are. They love to be maternal, and when one of them finds a young man to respond to her maternal cravings that's the last aspect of herself she wishes him to accept.

And now, much more important than all I've written above. How can I help? How can I, a hopeless exotic, gain admission to Medlicott Hall and lull the parental méfiance? You see, I'm thinking that I should like to have Rose to stay with me, for I am sure I shall love her, and then you shall see her all day and every day. We must contrive this somehow. Anyway, you can rely on me to help. And I want you to say of me some day, 'Das Ewig—Weibliche zieht uns hinan', the Eternal Feminine draws us upward, but I hope your German has progressed far enough to have translated that for yourself.

I think that Julius can now be considered well enough to give as many recitals in the year as will keep him before the public. He really had a magnificent reception last Saturday, and played that Bach Partita he played last year when you first came to our house. And, much to Emil's disgust, he played Raff's Cavatina for one of his encores! Emil has decided he will go in for a Balliol scholarship next year. He seems to be enjoying the Upper Sixth. You won't mind if I don't tell him your news? He's such a strange boy and I would not like him to write anything to you that would froisser your friendship. I fear I have handed on to him my jealousy. The fundamental trouble is this wretched division between the Jew and the Gentile. It is less insisted upon in England than elsewhere except perhaps Holland and the Scandinavian countries, but it is harsh enough even here.

Think, John, what it would have meant if you had been a Jew and had met your Rose. That would have brought you up against the problem of the future. Yet just now in this very letter I was babbling about English Roses for my sons. I fear it's improbable that they will ever find them. A Jewish woman is less exposed than a man to this continuous reminder of an inferior status, and what do you think it was which brought home to me as a girl the ultimate equality? A story in the 'Arabian Nights'. I had been weeping for the woes of Scott's Rebecca in 'Ivanhoe', and that very evening read the story in the 'Arabian Nights' about the Prince whose sorceress wife turned the lower part of him into marble and transformed into fishes the inhabitants of the city he ruled. The Mahometans into white fishes, the Christians into

blue fishes, the Parsees into red fishes, and the Jews into yellow fishes. The picture of those fishes swimming about in the pool, all equal as fishes, was very colourful and very consoling. When Emil first went to St James's I tried the effect of this story on him. He said rather wittily I think for a boy of thirteen, 'And no doubt the red, white, and blue fish thought they were the Union Jack.'

Perhaps you will be up in London for a week-end soon. Come and see me, and I'll play a part dear to women immemorially.

*Your affectionate
Miriam Stern*

John read the letters from his stepmother and Mrs Stern, resting in a roadside copse between Milbourne and Paxford. He was on his way to the meet at Medlicott Hall, with Rose's promise to find a good excuse for not hunting that day so that he and she could follow the hunt on foot. How little Mrs Stern, with all her imagination, would understand what it meant for Rose to sacrifice what might be the last chance she would have of being out before the season ended. Still, even if she had seemed not quite able to appreciate Rose her letter had taken the business seriously. And Elise had taken it seriously too. To be sure, she could hardly have done otherwise when she was proposing to bring this infant into the world next autumn. Still . . .

He mounted his Rover again and bicycled on faster and faster until from the top of the hill down into Paxford he could see with an effect of scattered playing-cards on a green baize cloth the meet in front of the Hall. His

heart began to beat so fast at the prospect of beholding Rose again that he had to jump off his machine and wait for a minute or two to secure his composure. Several of his brother officers would be out to-day. He must not arrive with too farouche an air.

When John saw Rose, the hunt was moving off to draw a neighbouring covert. He was spared the embarrassment of greeting her in front of people he knew.

"If they find in Barrington wood they're sure to cross the high road on the other side of the village. We'll get over to the cross-roads with our bikes and take to the country when we see which way the fox is running."

John was glad she took the proceedings in hand like this. As they reached the cross-roads the hounds came into sight across the rolling meadows running in exactly the opposite direction from that for which they were prepared.

"We'll have to bike on," Rose decided, "and trust to picking them up a mile or so further along."

But they did not pick them up further along.

A five-barred gate in a hedge of blackthorn, whose buds of blossom were pearling on the sunny side, revealed a sweep of ancient pasture rising to a wood, the solitude of which called to the young lovers.

"We could put our bikes on the other side of the hedge, and if we sat for a while by that wood we should see the hunt if it comes this way," John suggested.

Except for the green of the dog's-mercury and a few

pinched anemones it was still winter in the woods, but on the other side, out of the east wind, primroses infrequent and indeterminate as the stars of early twilight were visible along the mossy banks at the edge, and on the bald hill opposite numerous hares were gambolling. Of hounds and hunters and hunt-followers there was neither sight nor sound.

"I don't believe I ever made such a bad guess before," Rose declared.

"And do you feel mortified?"

"Not a bit."

"And not disappointed?"

She shook her head.

"And you still love me?"

She nodded very slowly in sweet assent, and when John drew her to him the first wakening of passion lighted her eyes even as in the same instant virginity thus challenged cast a tender veil to dim their transcendent fire. The lips of the lovers touched as flowers may touch in the wind. Then for a few moments they stood looking at one another until, borne down it seemed by excess of emotion, they sat upon that mossy bank by the wood's edge and began to chatter about the commonplaces of country life.

"You're looking rather pale," said John at last.

"I never kissed anybody before."

He was silent, awed by the simple statement.

From far away the sound of a huntsman's horn came thinly over the pastures and wind-bleached ploughlands.

"The hunt's coming this way," John exclaimed apprehensively.

He could not forget the swiftness, the intolerable swiftness with which the passing moments would sweep into

the flood of time Rose and himself and their March tryst.

"No, they're running in exactly the opposite direction."

She spoke with a cool certitude which seemed strangely out of keeping with the pallor of emotion in her countenance.

"White rose, white rose, I'm glad," he murmured.
"Because there are such thousands of things I want to tell you."

"And things I want to hear," she responded, laying quickly on his hand that slim brown boy's hand of hers.

Whatever eloquence John supposed he was waiting to pour forth was abruptly silenced by this first involuntary gesture of love. The thousand hopes and plans and confidences, dreams, assurances, and passionate reiterations, were reduced to the sighing of her name.

"Rose!"

Even to seek to express his love in kisses was beyond him. That first kiss must remain for yet a little while the only kiss so that the perfection of it should not be marred by so much as a kiss of like perfection in everything except its singleness. In this entranced silence, they sat for a long time upon that mossy bank. On both sides the lustrous green of holly-bushes sheltered them from the fretful wind which nagged the outskirts of the wood and fidgeted among the bare boughs within.

John was once upon the point of placing before Rose the problem of the date of their marriage when he was suddenly overwhelmed by a much more tremendous problem. How, even in the hatefully remote future of the three years and six months which appeared the earliest credible date, should he ever confront the realities of

marriage with this girl whom one kiss had shaken to that tremulous pallor? No doubt her mother would explain the facts, but if by chance her mother left her in ignorance . . . and anyway, nobody ever did explain such facts properly, so that on him would fall the revelation. She might be so horrified that her love for him would be killed by it. She might suppose he had gone mad. Would it be possible to consult Mrs Stern on this matter? But no, one could not discuss such a matter without a degree of frankness that was unimaginable between himself and a woman like Mrs Stern. John, a schoolboy still in his knowledge of live humanity, sat pondering his problem. And Rose sat silent too. So might they have sat until the grey of the March sky lost the luminosity of the day's prime and deadened in the chill of afternoon if a fox, splendidly rufous among the subdued colours of the winter scene, had not passed upon his anxious way hardly twenty yards below them.

"View-halloo! View-halloo! View-halloo!" Rose cried through cupped hands, springing to her feet.

"Oh, why bother about the hunt?" John protested. "If one fox has slipped them, good luck to him."

"I hallooed before I remembered where we were," Rose answered. "You see, John, I've never viewed a fox before except when I was only thinking of the fox."

"You don't really want to bring the whole galloping mob this way?" he pressed jealously.

"No, I just want to be with you."

"Well, perhaps we ought to make some effort to see what is going on," John suggested.

Her readiness to forgo the traditional attitude of a young sportswoman touched him. It would not do to let

selfishness begin. There was always to be an exquisite equality between Rose and himself. It would be wrong to impose his own views upon her even over such a trivial matter as hunting etiquette. For her this business possessed a significance far deeper than the jargon and ritual which served to express it. And naturally he would not himself shoot a fox, which meant that he was a worshipper of this very fetish without the logical right to scoff at initiates farther advanced than he was.

Later on that afternoon, when a good deal of unsuccessful bicycling in search of the hunt had made them feel they had genuinely followed it, Rose brought John back to the Hall and took him to the sitting-room she shared with her young sister Ann now away at school. In this shrine of childhood he became more sharply aware of the difference in their backgrounds and amid this intimacy of immemorial surroundings more sharply aware of himself as a stranger. All that their two childhoods shared were one or two of the framed coloured plates of old Christmas numbers of the *Graphic* or *Illustrated London News*—‘Bubbles’, ‘Yoicks! Tally-ho!', and the juvenile Nelson bidding farewell to his mother. On him as on her that demurely greedy damsel in mob-cap and high sash with cherries in her lap had gazed down throughout those long years between the Queen's two Jubilees. She had been a guest at their nursery teas, a well-behaved complacent minx never stretching across the table for a piece of cake or lolling upon it with her elbows, never drinking too noisily or speaking with her mouth full, never mumbling her grace or kicking the legs of the table with her heels, content year in and year out with her cherries, only a picture no doubt, yet to every child whose companion she

had been during those years as much alive as any of the little friends that actually came to tea, and likely to endure more vividly in the memory than any of them.

"I'm glad you have that picture 'Cherry Ripe', Rose, because I had it when I was a kid, and it gives me something to share with you during all those years before we met. I think if we had met years ago I should have loved you at once."

"I'll show you some photographs of me when I was younger," she offered.

And beside Rose, her hair soft against his temple and his cheek as they turned over the leaves of old albums, John sat conjuring the past therein revealed.

"Here I am after being blooded," she pointed out.

"You look very dumpy in those gaiters," he said, noting with satisfaction that this particular photograph was yellowing. "They didn't hunt where my grandfather's place was in Cornwall. They used to shoot the foxes. Or trap them. They used to bring one round in a sack and get a contribution from every farmer in turn for having killed it."

"John!" she exclaimed, aghast at the sacrilege.

"Well, there wasn't a pack of hounds anywhere in the west of Cornwall. But don't think that I'm suggesting you should trap or shoot foxes in Loamshire."

The faces grinning at a small Rose blood-bedabbled in the yellowing snapshot had made him jealous for a moment; but he was not prepared to run the risk of shocking her too profoundly.

"And you mustn't think that because I don't hunt, I want you to stop hunting. All the same," he went on, an ill fancy clutching at his heart, "I shan't be able to keep

from feeling anxious. I think I'm relieved that the season is nearly over. But don't for goodness' sake think I shall be a bore over your hunting. Don't think that, will you, darling Rose?"

She looked around at him, searching for evidence in his eyes of meaning what he said.

"No, really, you mustn't look like that. I'm bound to be jealous of the past."

As he said this he thought of Connie, of that French girl in Geneva, of one or two ridiculous infatuations with schoolfellows' sisters, and even of more ridiculous infatuations with schoolfellows themselves. How much of this ought he to confess to Rose? Oh, nothing, nothing. Let life begin with the night he met her first among the daffodils.

"It's time of which I'm jealous, not people," he explained. "In fact, I'm so desperately in love with you that it's really very difficult to talk sense. Kiss me again."

He jumped up from the table and held out his arms. She came to them, crimson-fired, and overlooked by that demurely greedy maiden in the mob-cap they stood imparadised, the grandfather clock seemed to tick most insistently, the fire to crackle very loudly, in that quiet room papered with a pattern of nursery rhymes.

"Dearest, this *must* be for ever, mustn't it?"

"Well, I should think it *must* be," she declared.

But when they were down at tea in the library, a long low room with half a dozen oriels of heavily mullioned lattice-windows opening on the great lawn one swift look from Rose's mother inspired John with a doubt of that imperative's validity. The blue glance from her eyes was

ruthless as a kingfisher's swoop to the stream. Yet immediately afterwards she was being as agreeable as in her cold way she seemed capable of being.

"It's nice for Rosie to have somebody of her own age to play around with, now that both her brothers are out of reach," she was saying, and 'What could she say more?' John was thinking.

Presently the Squire came in, boisterously deplored the fact that Petty Sessions had kept him from hunting to-day since by what he had heard the day had been an exhilarating one and in spite of this dry east wind the scent fairly good. John, preoccupied, indeed obsessed by the future of Rose and himself, fell to speculating on what the relationship really was between a couple like the Squire and his wife. Had they loved each other in youth as he and their eldest daughter loved each other now? The Squire was nearly sixty, which meant that he would have been nearer forty than thirty when he married a girl of nineteen. Rose to encourage their own dreams of early marriage had told him that her mother had been only nineteen. How could a girl of nineteen possibly have fallen in love with a middle-aged man? Yet unless he believed she had, he would have to believe that Rose was the fruit of a marriage of convenience, a belief most damaging to his own romantic preconceptions.

"And so you and Rosie took the wrong road, eh?" the Squire was barking. "A pity. You'd have seen a grand run, without a check for twenty minutes, if you'd made for the top of Thornbury Hill."

"Well, the first fox doubled back past us," Rose argued in defence of her judgment, "and if they had not lost him, the whole field must have come our way and we should

have had a ripping view. I bet if you were still Master you wouldn't have lost that first fox."

"Don't know about that," the Squire woofed, with the gratified muffled bark of a dog who has just successfully caught a tennis-ball. "Don't know about that, Rosie. But Tom Banks didn't tell me they lost that first fox in Marley Bottom."

"Did you see anybody in Stanstead?" his wife asked.

"Henry Falconer and Hugo Pledge were on the Bench with me. Hugo Pledge wanted to drive me back in one of those damned motor-cars of his. But I told him I wanted to get home to-night, ha-ha, and I thought I'd be safer on my old grey mare, ha-ha! Extraordinary the way a sensible fellow like Pledge doesn't mind making an ass of himself by carrying a noise and a stink all over the country. All the same, something will have to be done about those damned engines. Hubbard was telling me that he very nearly lost that shire stallion of his the other day. You know, Rosie? The animal that got a Special at the Agricultural Hall last year. Oh, a beauty! Well, it seems one of the stable lads was walking him along that bit of the Dolby road which passes the lane down to Hubbard's farm when, lo and behold, one of those damned puffing billies came round the corner hooting like a wagonload of monkeys and the stallion bolted and crashed through the nearest gate and damned nearly got his legs badly messed up. Poor old Hubbard was almost crying about it. Damn it, things have come to a pretty pass when the Queen's—I mean King's highway can be turned into a damned railway-track. Some of these bicyclists are bad enough whizzing all over the

place, but at least they don't stink. You mark my words, Angela, the Government will have to legislate."

"And how was Henry Falconer?" asked Mrs Medlicott.

"Henry? Oh, Henry was the same as usual. By the way, he asked after you, Rosie."

"I fancy Henry has rather a tender spot for Rosie," said Rose's mother, extinguishing, through a silver tube, the flame of the spirit-lamp under the kettle, with such a cool certitude of breath that John almost shivered at the ill omen.

"He thinks I haven't put my hair up yet," said Rose, who could feel John's anxiety, not less apparent to her because John himself began to sing the praises of Henry Falconer as the finest fellow in the battalion.

After tea Rose walked across the park with John to give Rudy and Speed the walk out of which they had been cheated by the meet. In the rich blue of the March dusk, he asked her if Henry Falconer was really in love with her. She reassured him.

"He's been a friend of mine since I was a kid of eight. Once I said I wanted to go to May Week at Cambridge because I'd heard two rather conceited cousins of mine bragging about being there. And Henry persuaded mother to let me go with Miss Matthews, my governess, and I had a simply glorious time. It must have been a frightful bore for an undergraduate lugging a kid of eight and her governess round Cambridge. We stayed in rooms. And Third Trinity made a lot of bumps. I was desperately excited."

"No wonder I get jealous of the past," John groaned.

"But, John darling, you couldn't possibly have taken

me to May Week ten years ago. You couldn't, could you? You'd have been a little boy in a sailor suit, wouldn't you? John, you would, wouldn't you?"

She was trying to rescue him from the moody silence into which the thought of Henry Falconer's privilege ten years ago had plunged him.

"Dearest Rose, I know I'm being idiotic, but unless I could be as idiotic as this I couldn't be so wildly in love with you as I am. Anyway, thank God, your mother agreed to your coming over to this bazaar discussion at the Vicarage."

"Yes, and you'll be waiting for me at the top of the hill beyond Paxford."

"At the bottom of the hill," said John firmly. "You don't think I could watch you walking all the way up by yourself, do you?"

"Well, no, but I think you'd better wait at the top till you see me coming, and then you can come coasting down to meet me, and we'll walk up together."

"You don't think your mother is beginning to fancy we're seeing each other too often?" John asked.

"No . . . no, I don't think she is," Rose answered a little doubtfully. "But I think it would be as well not to force ourselves upon her notice. It's quite natural for me to want a companion for what we are supposed to be doing to-day, but she might think it a little unnecessary for you to bicycle so many miles just to escort me to Milbourne. So that's why I think it's better for you to meet me on the other side of the village. I'll just say when I get back that I saw you and that I suggested your coming over to the Hall on Thursday to help me with that rock-garden I'm making. I've told her that you are frightfully good at

rock-gardens. And mother's very keen on gardening. In fact I sometimes think it's the only thing she is keen on."

"But I don't know anything about rock-gardens," John exclaimed in consternation.

"You'll be able to move the rocks about."

"Oh, I can do that."

"Well, that's all I meant. Still, if you *could* learn something about rock-plants before Thursday, John darling, it would help. That would impress mother more than anything. Oh, bother, here we are at the gates. Good evening, Dennett."

"Fine day, Miss Rose," said the gatekeeper, bustling to do his duty.

"I say, I'm afraid I dropped my handkerchief on the way across," said John.

The gate-keeper volunteered to run back and look for it, but was hurriedly told by the owner that he was sure he knew just where he had dropped it.

"If you'd hold my bicycle a moment . . ."

"Certainly, sir."

When John and Rose reached a grove of Douglas firs some fifty yards along the drive he drew her within their dark shade.

"We couldn't say good night by the gates," he reminded her.

"Oh, John, I love you so."

Her voice in the darkness of this grove was disembodied: it was like some sweet sound of the night itself, and her movement to let him take her in his arms was light and brief as the flutter of a roosting bird.

"On this day of days, good night."

"Did you get your handkerchief quite safe, sir?"
Dennett enquired.

"Yes, thanks."

"I've lit your lamp for you, sir."

With a word of thanks to the gatekeeper and the most casual farewell he could muster for Rose, John jumped upon his bicycle and rode fast away. The thought of being so near to Rose and yet without any possible excuse to see her before Tuesday decided him to go up to London the next day and kill there the time that stretched between now and their next meeting. At any rate he would be able to talk about her to Mrs Stern and Elise.

"Why, John, what can have lured you away from Verona already?" Elise asked when he reached Church Row about noon on Saturday.

"What makes you say that?" he exclaimed in astonishment.

"Well, when a young man arrives with a copy of the Temple *Romeo and Juliet* sticking out of his pocket one is justified in assuming that he will not be slow to take the allusion."

"Yes, I was reading it in the train."

But he did not add that the discovery of Romeo's sudden transfer of his love from Rosaline to Juliet had enormously increased his appreciation of Shakespeare's knowledge of human nature, and removed the last vestige of self-reproach over Connie. After all a great deal more lay between his falling in love with Connie and Rose than between Romeo's love for Rosaline and Juliet. And nobody could deny that love.

"Reading and dreaming, eh, John?"

Elise was sitting in the back window of the library,

through which the March sun was streaming with the warmth of May in this well-graced room. She was bloomed with health, her cheeks as rosy as the tulips on the table by her side, her figure as trim, no more than neatly rounded yet by three months of pregnancy.

"You've not said anything to father?" he asked suddenly.

In beholding her like this in the well-being of oncoming motherhood John apprehended for the first time that she must love his father and feared at once for his secret. She shook her head, the sun glinting upon her golden-brown hair.

"No, John, not a word. You'll have to let me judge the wise moment for that. But tell me about your Rose before your father comes in."

So John tried.

"I feel a little nervous of Mrs Medlicott, John. She sounds tight-lipped by your description of her, and tight-lipped blondes of forty are the devil. No, you needn't look at your stepmother's mouth, my dear. It will never be tight-lipped."

That was true. Not that generous bow. *She* must have been a lovely girl. Was his father when he kissed those red lips ever jealous of the wasted years? She could not be so sympathetic over Rose and himself unless she too had had a love affair once upon a time. How fatuous of him to have compared her to Mrs Damson when he saw her first! Too utterly fatuous!

"What are you thinking, John?"

"I was wondering why you had not married before you met my father."

Her eyes twinkled.

"No, John, you'll have to be content with Romeo and Juliet," she said, with a smile. "I'm not going to indulge you with the recital of my own outlived emotions. Let it be enough for you that I am now a very happy woman. Tell me, would you rather I were going to give you a sister or a brother?"

"Well, perhaps a sister."

"With your present belief in feminine perfection, eh? But it wasn't a fair question, for I know you'll give a friendly hand to either Prudence or David."

"Those are the names you have chosen? Rather good ones."

"And now what about meeting your Rose? I dare say I could persuade Mrs Damson to invite me down to the Vicarage for two or three days, and you'll have to contrive the rest. But it won't do to let Mrs Medlicott suspect that you are trying to force her hand. Yes, John, I suspect your future mother-in-law. I'm sure she won't be nearly so tolerant as your present stepmother."

"No, really, she's very nice. Lots of Englishwomen have that cold manner."

"Observed that cynical man of the world, John Pendarves Ogilvie," Elise laughed. "Who was Mrs Medlicott?"

"Her name was Trotton. The Trottons have a place in the west of the county."

"I'll consult my mother, who is particularly strong on the landed gentry."

Alexander Ogilvie came in at this point. Yes, marriage with Elise had certainly improved him, his son decided. This time last year if he had arrived without a preliminary preface of postcards and telegrams his father would have

examined him and cross-examined him and wound up with a long jobation on the feelings of the household and the necessity of less casual behaviour. Now he merely seemed glad to see him.

"This is a pleasant surprise, John. Are you lunching with us?"

"Yes, I told Watson."

"And how is the volunteering going? I had a letter from the good Damson expressing approval of your keenness, but apparently rather worried over your choice of literature. Ibsen, eh?"

"Oh, Alec, you didn't tell me! How delicious," exclaimed Elise. "Are there still people who are shocked by Ibsen? Which play was it, John?"

"A Doll's House."

"Well, I don't know that I particularly care for Ibsen," said the barrister. "It's boring stuff."

"But, Alec darling, you weren't shocked by it," his wife protested.

"No, I wasn't shocked by it. The Central Criminal Court cures one of being shocked except professionally, when one is trying to discredit a witness."

"Judges soon recover their primal innocence," said Elise. "Father who in private life is the best-informed and most broad-minded of human creatures jumps like an old maid at the Folies Bergères when he is hearing an Appeal."

"If an old maid were innocent she wouldn't jump at the Folies Bergères," the barrister pointed out drily.

"Now, don't be logical, Alec. It's too lovely a morning for logic. John, I must come down to your Vicarage and meet your Vicar. It would be perfect to meet some-

body who is genuinely shocked by the *Doll's House*. In fact it would almost be like an actual scene in an Ibsen play."

Yes, married life was very good for his father, John decided once more. He probably might quite easily have been shocked by Ibsen if he had not married Elise.

"By an odd coincidence there's a matinée of *A Doll's House* this afternoon at the Parthenon," Elise announced, after looking at *The Times*. "Would you like to take John and me, Alec?"

"No, I think I get enough stale air in the Old Bailey," her husband replied. "I thought of going over to Wimbledon and having another shot at liking golf on the London Scottish course. But why don't you and John go?"

"Shall we, John?"

"Rather. It would be ripping."

By 1901 a performance of an Ibsen play in England had become a recognized intellectual occasion. Popular audiences had given up being infuriated by the foreign dramatist and agreeing next morning with Mr Clement Scott's expression of their fury in a couple of columns of *The Daily Telegraph*. They left Ibsen nowadays to the few people who really enjoyed that kind of morbid stuff and the larger minority who did not really enjoy it, but supposed that the appearance of enjoying it conferred upon them intellectual distinction. The result was that the gloom beyond the footlights was not less remarkable

in the auditorium. No satisfactory explanation has yet been offered why an intensive cultivation of the mind should so seldom be accompanied by even a normal cultivation of the body. The audience that afternoon at the Parthenon was typical of an intellectual occasion in London. There were a few æsthetic young men to recall the glories of the 'nineties before they were eclipsed by the disgrace of Oscar Wilde; but homosexuality was still under a cloud, and people were inclined to turn round and stare at them as twenty years later people would still turn round to stare at a couple of monocled Lesbians or as thirty-five years later, in spite of a large, indeed of an almost indiscriminate tolerance of the eccentricities of the flesh, people might still turn round to stare at a young man who entered the stalls of a theatre, arm-in-arm with a goat.

At the same time, the intellectuals who in 1901 turned round to stare at these willowy and æsthetic young men were no doubt secretly gratified by their presence, deriving from it an assurance that their own attendance at an advanced play was a courageous assertion of their own dissociation from the common herd. Those æsthetic young men were rare. The rest of the audience seemed to consist of middle-aged men with gallinaceous necks rising from slightly grubby collars and dressed in dingy ill-fitting tweeds, of younger men with caseous complexions and tired hair in dusty serge or dark cashmere but equally grubby collars, of women tallowy and unpowdered in djibbahs, of weatherbeaten women in shirt-waists (who sat with their hats in their laps because they were not to be confused with the minxes who went to matinées at frivolous theatres and refused to remove their hats,

thereby providing frequent correspondence in the Press), and of equally weatherbeaten women whose dresses had the effect of curtains which had not been made for the windows they were serving and whose hair had the desolate appearance of handiwork or puzzle abandoned unfinished.

"I never before saw so many ugly people all at once," John observed to his stepmother as they took their seats in the middle of the stalls.

She sniffed at her vinaigrette.

Avowedly to achieve the deeper solemnity of continental histrionics, but actually to save expense, there was no orchestra, so that there was no music to drown the intellectual conversation of the audience during the intervals until a lugubrious hammer struck three strokes to announce the raising of the curtain.

"I think Ibsen gets right down below the surface, if you know what I mean."

"Exactly. You have exactly expressed what I was telling them at our Literary Society last week. It is the sub-soil of human nature in which he digs."

"Oh, Mr Sprules, what a wonderful comparison!"

"And in doing so starts a crop of thistles on which the borgewar prick their fingers."

"Oh, I think that's too wonderful, Mr Sprules. I suppose you're a great admirer of George Bernard Shaw?"

"I consider him our only dramatist."

"I'm so glad you think that, Mr Sprules, because I think that, and I do get so *much* hostility from the *average* person."

"Ah, the average person . . ."

"I don't really think Pinero is in the front rank, do you?"

"No, because Pinero always sacrifices life to theatrical effect. His talent is a moth which continually singes itself in the footlights."

"Really Mr Sprules, you *are* so witty."

"Whereas Ibsen and Shaw always sacrifice the theatrical effect to life."

"How d'ye do, Mrs Blewitt? Rather a wonderful afternoon so far, don't you think?"

"Oh, how do you do, Mr Culpeper? How clever of you to recognize me!"

John nudged Elise to draw her attention to the large woman thus recognized.

"You might as well call it wonderful to recognize Mont Blanc from Geneva," he whispered.

"I think Nora is so good, don't you? Let me introduce my daughter, Mr Culpeper. This is her first Ibsen play, and she is so thrilled."

"It's frightfully good, isn't it?"

"And it's very encouraging to see such a well-filled house."

"You know, I believe the taste of the public is definitely improving."

"But I don't think Ibsen will ever be really popular in this country, do you?"

"Oh no, I think he will be spared that humiliation."

"Let us hope so. Let us devoutly hope so!"

The lugubrious three strokes with the hammer warned the house to be silent, and as the intellectual audience settled itself for the second act, there was diffused upon what air there was in the theatre a faint mustiness of humanity.

Elise sniffed again at her vinaigrette.

"I think it's rather a stuffy play," John declared at the fall of the final curtain. "And yet it's fascinating in a way."

"Like the *petite vie de province* it relates," said Elise.

"I hope you won't walk out on father like that," he laughed. "You know he used to be a bit like Nora's husband."

"Oh no, not really, John."

"You've improved him extraordinarily. I wish I could remember better what he was like with my mother. He was awfully like Nora's husband with me."

"You must remember, John, that children are terrifying. You frightened him. I shall be frightened of David, I expect. And even more frightened of Prudence. I shall rely on you to make a bridge."

They were waiting outside the theatre for a hansom to drive them to Buszard's. A matinée in those days not rounded off with a richly variegated tea was incomplete. Suddenly John caught sight of Mrs Stern and Emil. His father had never suggested a meeting, and John believing as he did in the resemblance between Mrs Stern and his mother had been rather glad. But he could not let pass this opportunity of introducing Elise to her.

"Of course, John, I should love to meet her. We'll invite them to tea with us."

He pushed his way through the crowd to where the Sterns were standing.

"John! Who would have thought of meeting you here this afternoon?"

"I'm with my stepmother. And I want you to meet her."

Miriam Stern hesitated a perceptible instant. One of the charms of John's company was his detachment. To meet the second Mrs Ogilvie might spoil that detachment. Besides, a woman could and probably would divine the potential relationship between them.

"But won't Emil and I be *de trop*?" she demurred.

"No, no. She wants to meet you."

So presently they were all in a four-wheeler jogging toward Buszard's, and John was asking Emil if he had liked the play.

"I saw it in Berlin four years ago. It seemed very dated, I thought, this afternoon."

John noticed Elise dart a quick look at his friend, who was out of jackets now, but who still appeared no more than fifteen. He must explain to her afterwards that Emil really was an unusual youth. She was probably thinking him a most ghastly little prig.

"No doubt when it was first produced about 1880," Emil went on, "it seemed revolutionary. And I dare say it did let a little air in among the horsehair furniture, but I think Nora ought to have been wearing a bustle this afternoon."

Miriam Stern no doubt felt that her son's air of antiquity must be sounding rather absurd, for she came to his rescue by chaffing him.

"Emil dear, what do you know about bustles?"

"I remember when you wore one. I can remember a thing like a small birdcage, and I remember the bustle of that nurse we had when we lived in Kilburn. It was a pale-blue half-moon stuffed like a cushion, and she used to hang it over one of the knobs at the foot of her bed. But anyway, would I have to remember what a bustle

actually looked like to know that Nora should have been wearing one if the effect of *A Doll's House* was to come off? I wouldn't have had to see a farthingale to know that you couldn't walk on the stage as you're dressed now and expect to carry off an Elizabethan discussion of domestic morals."

"I'm not sure I agree with you there, Emil," John put in. "I'm not sure if it oughtn't to be one of the tests of a great play that it should be independent of externals."

"Exactly. That's exactly what I'm trying to point out," Emil retorted. "I think Ibsen is doubly limited as a dramatist, first by the essential provinciality of Norway and secondly by the period in which he was writing. It's impossible to believe that human nature will ever again attempt to falsify life as it falsified it during the second half of the nineteenth century, when almost everybody ceased to believe in God but continued to worship habits derived from an assumption of God's existence. Ibsen was engaged in sweeping up husks, and that's no occupation for the greatest art."

"But why talk of him in the past? He's still writing."

"Nothing contemporary of any contemporary value. Did you ever read that dismally ridiculous play *Little Eyolf*? Or the play he brought out last year—*When We Dead Awaken?*"

John confessed ignorance of both.

"Well, if you'd read them you'd know that he had said whatever he had to say of any value at least ten years ago."

"I think you're being much too sweeping, Emil," his mother put in. "*John Gabriel Borkman* is a superb play. And when you condemn him for his provinciality and

nineteenth-century limitations please remember *Peer Gynt* and *Brand* and even *Emperor and Galilean*."

"I'm glad you qualified the last one with 'even,'" said Emil.

"But *Peer Gynt*?" his mother pressed.

He shrugged his shoulders.

"That's what he always does when I drive him into a corner," Miriam Stern explained to Elise.

"I'm afraid I sympathize with that shrug. I've never been able to get on with *Peer Gynt*," the younger woman declared.

"Just a pretentious pantomime to most people outside Norway," Emil went on. "But no doubt a work of profound symbolic importance in its own country. That's where I admire English literature. Nobody tries to be symbolic—probably because nobody in England would respond to the significance if any English writer tried. It is an extraordinary thing, if you meditate upon it, that no modern country has had so many great poets and that no modern country has produced so few readers to appreciate what they have written. No country is less musical and yet in proportion to its capacity for appreciation no country has honoured musicians more extravagantly."

"Extravagantly?" John questioned.

"A knighthood is an extravagant honour for a nation which thinks so much of titles. But it is Sullivan who is knighted, not Gilbert."

"What about Tennyson and Leighton? No musicians have been created peers," John pointed out.

Again Emil shrugged his shoulders, and further argument was cut short by the cab's arrival at Buszard's.

There the necessity of choosing from the rich selection of cakes prevented its being renewed.

"Why does no private house ever run to teas like this?" John demanded. "I've never been to tea with a duke, but I don't believe even a duke would give me a tea like this."

"If a housewife might be permitted an observation, John," said his stepmother, "the cause is the unfortunate tendency of cakes to become stale. You could not have as much variety without an economically unimaginable waste."

"The best cakes I ever ate," John said reminiscently, "came, I think, from Doncaster. There was a fellow at school who had an uncle or something . . ."

"An aunt probably," put in Elise, with a smile.

"Well, some kind of relation, and he or she used to send him some cakes called Othellos, Desdemonas, Iagos, and Cassios. They were about the size and shape of a cricket-ball. The Othellos were chocolate outside with a sort of chocolate squash inside, the Desdemonas were white with a creamy squash inside, the Iagos were yellow with a custardy squash inside, and the Cassios were striped red and white."

"What was the squash inside them?" Emil asked eagerly.

"I can't remember," said John in a tone of profound regret. "I always ate them fourth, and by that time one was feeling rather gorged."

"I remember some glorious cakes at a *pâtisserie* in Lyons," said Emil, taking up the pæan. "And some of them cost no more than two sous. There was one made of a kind of greenish marzipan in the shape of a basket

with flowers of cherry and angelica, and there was another with cream divided by chocolate."

"You see, he's human after all," Mrs Stern claimed, turning with a laugh to Elise.

When the tea-party was over John was eager to hear from Elise the impression made on her by his friends.

"I expect you thought Emil rather dogmatic for a kid, but he's older than he looks. In fact he's almost seventeen now."

"Did you say seventy?" Elise laughed. "But no, of course, I realize he's exceptionally precocious."

"It's not showing off," John assured her. "He's perfectly natural. I don't think he bothers himself in the least what other people think provided he has a genuine opinion of his own to utter. They're Jews of course."

"Yes, I had realized that too. Mrs Stern is inclined to be in love with you."

"To be what?" John gasped.

"To be in love with you, my dear."

"I suppose I shall hear from Mrs Stern next that you are inclined to be in love with me," John said sarcastically.

"Why, Mrs Stern is the same age as my mother would be now."

"That wouldn't prevent an inclination to be in love with you. On the contrary it might easily encourage it."

John shook his head in despair at feminine imaginativeness.

"Fortunately I've no inclination to believe you're right, Elise, or I should become dashed self-conscious with poor Mrs Stern. You must remember she was the first woman older than myself whom I had a chance to confide in."

Elise hesitated. Then she said quickly:

"It was a silly thing to say, John. Forget it. I was only half in earnest. Women do say silly things like that."

But she could see by her stepson's increasing preoccupation that the suggestion was beginning to puzzle his mind. He was thinking over the letter Mrs Stern had written to him about Rose and remembering Fontainebleau and, while telling himself all the time it was absurd, beginning indeed to wonder if conceivably Elise could be right.

"John, John, please don't think any more about what I said. I could kick myself for it. Ascribe it to maternal jealousy. I expect I was wishing that I had had the chance of being your first confidante. You have been so very sweet over my marriage to your father, so good indeed that no doubt vanity was pricking me on to search for the explanation in myself rather than in you. I was wanting to suppose myself as indispensable to you in your way as I am proud to believe myself indispensable to your father in his. Probably I'm equally wrong in both respects. It would do me a world of good and serve me quite right to find your father was having an affair with a woman younger than I am."

"You won't find that," John prophesied. "In fact I don't know how he ever managed to risk his dignity by proposing to you. It must take a deuce of a lot of nerve for a man of his age to propose to an attractive woman twenty years younger than himself."

"He ran no risk and he needed no nerve, John. I chased him shamelessly. And John, please, please think no more of my idiotic remark about Mrs Stern."

Nevertheless when John went round to dinner at Claremont Gardens that evening he could not forget

what Elise had said, and he blushed when Mrs Stern asked him suddenly across the candle-lit table why he was looking at her with so many questions in his eyes.

"Don't worry, John. You and Emil are going to get your talk together after dinner, and then later on we can have our talk," she told him.

And again his cheeks crimsoned. He hoped she would assume it was on account of Rose.

"Couldn't we have some music?" John in his embarrassment suggested.

"Ha-ha!" Julius ejaculated derisively. "Thanks very much and all that, but I'm not performing at home nowadays. So you won't have to try to think of the right thing to say about a lot of fiddling which has bored you to death."

"Julius, I'm not sure that your manners are very attractive," said his mother.

"They're jolly offensive," observed Emil.

The younger boy winked at John.

"My beloved mother and my *adored* brother have entered into an alliance to squash me since the unqualified success of my winter concerts—ahem—see notices by all the leading cloth-eared critics of the Press."

"And I really don't think, Julius darling, that you're being terribly amusing," his mother told him.

"I really didn't think I was myself," Julius agreed, with another wink at John. "And couldn't I have some more of this soufflé, please, seeing that my *adored* brother guzzled half the cakes at Buszard's this afternoon?"

"You'd have guzzled all of them if you'd been there," Emil jeered.

"I believe you are perfectly right, Mr Stern. Oh

good, here's the soufflé. I love my brother with an E because he will be eminent one day—perhaps. I hate him with an E because he's excitable. I shall take him to the East and feed him upon éclairs and Epsom salts, and his name is Emil."

"I love my brother with a J," Emil retorted, "because he is junior. I hate him with a J because he is a Jew. I shall send him to Jericho and feed him upon the jawbones of asses and jalap, and his name is Julius."

For the rest of dinner the conversation did not escape from this slightly irritating atmosphere of schoolboy banter, and Miriam Stern was glad when Emil and John retired to Emil's small room at the end of the front hall, and she carried Julius off to that grey drawing-room with the curtains of sea-green velvet. Julius demanded to know why this was not considered the right moment for talking over his butterfly collection with their guest.

"Because Emil and John want to have a talk together, dearest boy."

"Like two old gentlemen in a first-class smoker," Julius observed.

Although he let her persuade him he was inclined to sulk when he and she reached the drawing-room.

"I'm not going to be treated as a kid indefinitely," he announced.

"No one has any such base designs against you," his mother assured him. "But you must remember that John is Emil's friend, and that if you were older you would, I hope, have the tact to recognize that for yourself."

She spoke a little sharply, not so much because she was really worrying at all over the interruption of Emil's talk with John as in anticipation of her desire to eliminate both

Emil and Julius from her own talk with him later on this evening. She felt certain that John's young stepmother must have penetrated to the inspiration of her interest in John. Woman did not deceive woman. All she was wondering was whether she had said anything about it to John himself.

"You don't feel like playing the Grieg sonata?" she asked her son. Impatience to know what Mrs Ogilvie had said about her made the thought of reading *The Speaker* or *The Saturday Review* unbearable.

"No, I've decided not to play that musical nougat at my next concert."

'But I thought you were liking it.'

"I like nougat in the right mood."

A sudden sense of his ungraciousness overcame the boy.

"What I *would* like," he said, taking her arm and drawing her to the piano, "is for you to play to me."

"What for instance?" she asked gratefully, because she had been feeling that if she sat down to play of her own accord the uneasiness of her mood would communicate itself to Julius and spur him into some dismaying observation.

"I think I'd like you to play *Carnaval!*"

"Twenty minutes at least," she reminded him.

He flung himself at full length upon the wide sofa beside the fire.

"That's a very good time," he proclaimed.

Miriam Stern seated herself at the black Steinway grand strung to concert pitch and really too brilliant for this Hampstead drawing-room, but chosen to compete with Julius and his Carlo Bergonzi violin. As almost

always Miriam Stern was dressed in black, and when she raised the lid of the keyboard and ran her white fingers over the keys the effect was of a slim mistress of the *haute école* trying the paces of a great ebony horse.

"Can't you play it without the music yet?" Julius asked incredulously when his mother opened the volume of Schumann.

She shook her head and began:

PRÉAMBULE . . . how long would Emil and John stay talking downstairs? Would Emil resent her suggestion that John wanted to talk to her alone? Would he suspect her interest? Ah, no, not if John had been talking to him about this girl. What was the time now? Only half-past eight. She could not send Julius away to bed until ten. . . .

PIERROT . . . it was ridiculous that she should not yet have conquered this infatuation. Was it merely sexual desire? What mysterious irony in the mysterious universe made it possible for a woman to loathe physical intercourse with a man, and yet adore the fruit of such intercourse? Poor Ernest had always known she hated that side of their married life. She had tried to hide her disgust. She had tried to be the dutiful woman of the Orient whose greatest privilege in life was held to be ministering to the desires of the man who had chosen her. No doubt Ernest was superficially Occidental, Occidental enough to be more hurt than angry by her inability to abandon herself to his love-making . . . a wrong note . . .

"Sorry, Julius!"

. . . yes, Ernest had been hurt. She had denied his pride even the perfect fulfilment of marriage. He had remained even then a second violin in the orchestra, jealous of the two sons he had produced . . . a sickly jealous man with hungry

eyes . . . and always a little grubby . . . another wrong note . . .

"Julius, I'm playing atrociously?"

. . . and so surreptitious in his amorous advances. . . .

ARLEQUIN . . . I love you, John. I love you, John. I love you, John. I love your clear grey eyes. I love your slim brown hands. I love your clear-cut mouth and your sidelong smile and your manner half sly, half debonair. What after all is time? Time is not disposed of by a definite question, foolish Miriam. What are the first crow's-feet? What is the first excessive softening of the breast? What are the hundred secret indignities which time inflicts upon a woman's body? But I love you, John. I love you, John, I love you, John. . . .

VALSE NOBLE . . . and if like somebody in an old fairy-tale I could have my wish granted I would choose to meet you at Victoria to-morrow and to leave the raw London Spring and to cross the turbulent grey Channel and to go crashing along the railway from Boulogne to Paris, revelling in the foul coal-smoke of the continental expresses and to go driving round in a fiacre through the racketty Paris streets to that quiet hôtel, and the next day to travel on southward, southward to the peach-blossom in Italy, and there to lie awake and watch the faded blue of the early morning sky, with John asleep beside me. . . .

EUSEBIUS . . . but I would want another wish granted. I would want to be given back the twenty years which stretch like a chasm between us. He might wake from that sleep among the blossoming peach-trees of Italy, wake and by that early morning light perceive that I too was faded, not beautifully like the sky, not virginally like the sky. . . .

FLORESTAN . . . but not yet, not yet. He is too young yet to be critical. You are too young yet, John. She could spare him that disillusionment if she had the strength to be wise, the strength to withdraw from him while he still loved her, while in the wonder of finding his ardour fanned, fanned, fanned to an intensity of which as yet he could not imagine woman capable. If then she had the strength to withdraw, surely neither he nor she would ever regret such a passion? She would teach him what woman was, set him at eighteen years upon the highway of life more securely, more completely, more beautifully armed than any of his fellows. She would equip him by the self-sacrifice of her own passion to win more from the love of woman than any of his fellows. . . .

COQUETTE . . . what could he hope to learn from this romantic infatuation for a girl of his own age? But he would not be expecting or be wanting to learn anything. Just the sweet dreaming of youth . . . birds in the high hall-garden, Maud, Maud, they were crying and calling . . . she is coming, my dove, my dear; she is coming, my life, my fate; the red rose cries, 'she is near, she is near', and the white rose weeps 'she is late' . . . Maud is just seventeen . . . raum ist in der kleinsten Hütte für ein glücklich liebend Paar . . . yes, yes, room in the smallest shack for a happy loving pair. . . .

RÉPLIQUE . . . but to suggest that this girl was not a lyric love, half angel and half bird, would gain nothing except scorn for herself. And deservedly. . . .

PAPILLONS . . . this folly had been fought and vanquished last summer at Fontainebleau. The summer of 1900. Those yellow butterflies he had enshrined in a casket for a memorial . . . not to turn them black like the butterflies in the poem . . . ah, yes, it was too late, yes, yes, yes yes. . . .

"This is Papillons, Julius."

"I know."

. . . those yellow butterflies of Fontainebleau . . . that golden age of Fontainebleau. . . .

A.S.C.H.—S.C.H.A.—(LETTRES DANSANTES) . . . Schumann had fallen in love with a girl of sixteen, and had even managed to extract a thrill from linking the letters of his own name with Asch, the birthplace of Ernestine . . . but he had grown tired of his young sweetheart and fallen in love finally with. . . .

CHIARINA . . . in spite of those dancing letters, he had written this music for Clara Wieck before he had admitted to his own heart that he loved her, while still he fancied himself in love with sixteen-year-old Ernestine. . . .

CHOPIN . . . what warmth in this episode! . . . what suave moonlight upon the music! . . .

"How charming this part is, Julius!"

ESTRELLA . . . but this was lovely too, this music for Ernestine. . . . Ernestine would be nearly eighty if she were still alive . . . dear, dead women, with such hair, too, what's become of all the gold used to hang and brush their bosoms? sixteen-year-old Ernestine was dead anyway. . . .

RECONNAISSANCE . . . and this eighteen-year-old Rose, she would die within a year . . . these young loves of Spring were brief as the blossom of the orchards, as the blossom cut by the East wind of Spring. Yet leaving fruit behind. Brief but not therefore barren. . . .

PANTALON ET COLOMBINE . . . age and youth . . . if Clara Schumann had loved the youthful Brahms? . . . Egeria! sweet creation of some heart which found no resting-

place so fair as thine ideal breast . . . but the young Brahms had wanted no ideal breast for resting-place . . . the music Clara inspired was the music of a passion overcome, and anyway he was in his mid-twenties when poor Robert Schumann was in the asylum . . . and Robert's wife was not yet forty . . . fifteen years between them, not twenty, and those twenty the long rich years of youth. . . .

VALSE ALLEMANDE . . . *a German waltz indeed, that dance of Clara Schumann and Johannes Brahms while poor Robert was in the asylum . . . suicidal, so much afraid of music now that a bunch of keys could send him into a paroxysm . . . yet, John, I would dance a German waltz with you if you asked me . . . and forty is so young when one is nearly thirty-nine. . . .*

PAGANINI . . .

"Here's your old friend, Julius."

"Paganini?"

"Yes."

"It's a pity he never taught Schumann how to write decently for the violin."

AVEU . . . *if she should tell John to-night as frankly as she had been telling herself that she loved him? . . . that young stepmother of his must have known, and curiosity must have made her press John to find out what he thought of that Jewish woman . . . yes, that handsome Jewish woman . . . for I am still beautiful and I desire the perfection of human desire while it could still be beautiful. . . .*

PROMENADE . . . *the seduction of youth, that was a game which goddesses alone could play with dignity . . . with dignity . . . with dignity . . . and what did dignity matter in bed?*

"Mother! What are you playing?"

"Some disgracefully wrong notes. I am so sorry, Julius! My mind was wandering from the music."

PAUSE . . . this was madness . . . he loved this rose-pink English girl with her dogs and her horses . . . and perhaps to horrify him by trying to change their relationship would mean that she would lose this boy, this boy, this boy, this boy for ever . . . last summer was gone . . . où sont les neiges d'antan? . . . Où sont les chaleurs d'antan . . . it was then she should have flung dignity away . . . too late now. . . .

MARCHE DES DAVIDSBÜNDLER . . . she must not let him down . . . that young stepmother would step so neatly into her place beside him . . . she was the real rival to fear, not this strawberry and cream girl . . . because after all, even though she had allowed this lunatic passion to be fanned to life again by jealousy, their fundamental relationship was idealistic, and that must not be destroyed. No! No! No! That must never be destroyed. Never! Never!

"You marched against the Philistines with great determination, mother," said Julius as she rose from the piano.

"Twenty-four minutes. I timed you. Let's play piquet till the conference of the two old gentlemen downstairs is finished."

"And so," Emil was saying to John, "you've decided to become a normal Englishman. Oh, well, that was inevitable when you became a volunteer."

John felt grateful to his friend for accepting the obviousness of his falling in love with Rose. At least he appreciated the difference between this love and his love for Connie. It did not strike him that Emil like himself was a year older.

An hour later, he was feeling equally grateful to his friend's mother for the way she was understanding so perfectly his love for Rose. Sitting with her there in that grey room with the sea-green velvet curtains, he felt tempted even to confide in her his apprehensions about the effect on Rose of the physical revelation involved in marriage. The silence of the Hampstead night broken very occasionally by the faint clip-clop and jingle of a hansom in Fitzjohn's Avenue encouraged intimacy, and if Mrs Stern had not expected him to be frank she would not have bothered to disembarrass their talk of Emil's presence.

"The chief thing I dread is the strain of a long engagement," she was saying. "It's easy to talk about self-control, but . . ."

She broke off the sentence, and the unuttered conclusion seemed to be flopping round the room like a heavy bat in search of a resting-place.

"I shall always have self-control, Mrs Stern. I think I know what you mean, but if you knew Rose you'd realize that . . . that . . ." he stumbled. It was pretty difficult to find words for what he was trying to say.

"What should I realize, John?"

Her voice was velvet.

"Well, I should be too much afraid of shocking her."

"Der Liebe vermindert die weibliche Feinheit und

verstärkt die männliche. I think it was Jean-Paul who said that. It wouldn't be a bad idea for you to choose Jean-Paul Richter for your German reading. Could you follow that quotation?"

"Not very well."

"It means 'Love diminishes feminine delicacy and increases the delicacy of man'. But that won't make the strain less severe on both of you."

John blushed. It seemed presumptuous to tell a woman like Mrs Stern that she could have no conception of the ethereal delicacy, the sublime innocence of a girl like Rose. Besides, one could not talk about things like that even to a woman as worldly-wise as Mrs Stern.

"You are old enough, John, not to blush at the simple facts of life," she was saying now in that voice of velvet. Sea-green velvet curtains . . . grey walls . . . slim tall figure in black . . . a white hand resting upon a piece of silver brocade thrown across the arm of the high-backed settee . . . fine red bow of a mouth upcurving in an ironical smile, but a tenderness in her dark eyes that took from it the least hint of mockery.

"I know what you mean, Mrs Stern, but if you saw Rose . . ." he stumbled again, and was silent.

"I should find her immune from the emotions which waken a girl to life? If I really thought that, John, I should not be quite so willing to listen to your rhapsodies. Now don't think I'm being cynical when I tell you that whatever your emotions may be, hers will be very much the same. It is youth's privilege to believe that its emotions are unique. You might say that the greatest wisdom which experience teaches is the amount of our emotions we share with other people. And will you remember that,

John, when I repeat that I do dread the strain of a long engagement?"

"Well, naturally I would give anything to be married now. But that's like wishing to fly to the moon," John sighed.

"You see, at present, you are living emotionally on the knowledge that your Rose exists. In that state of exaltation nothing else matters. It is now like one of those imaginative loves of the Middle Ages which were possible when the world was younger, or rather when our particular Western culture was younger. I include myself in that because, though I am a Jewess without as far as I know a drop of Gentile blood in my veins, I have moved further and further away from our strict racial traditions and taken to myself Western eyes from which I regard the rest of the world. Those great imaginative loves of the Middle Ages were not then the peculiar privilege of youth, as you know. But when the world began to grow up rapidly again with the experience of a former culture to mature it, those imaginative loves could not maintain themselves against the pressure of what was seeming reality, of what perhaps was reality, and such imaginative loves were denied to all except the young and seldom granted to them, and even when they were granted it was only for a little while. The moment must come, John, when the exaltation roused in you by the idea of Rose will turn to the consuming ardour of complete possession. You will be horrified at first by what you will think of the sullyng of your ideal of Rose by your own base passion, but if she loves you it will be too late. You will have set her on fire too, and to quote our friend Jean-Paul again, 'Ein liebendes Mädchen wird unbewust kühner'. She may be

utterly innocent, utterly ignorant. The normal feelings of a girl will be beyond her control. She loves you, and in loving you she will without knowing it grow bolder. There is nothing which spurs passion like artless virginity. Remember that in the confidence of your self-control. And it's then that the strain upon your emotion will begin. The notion of surrendering will outrage your sense of decency. Every hour you spend with her will be no satisfaction for the tormenting hours you spend apart from her, and the almost inevitable end of this spring rapture will either be that you . . . but, John, I had not meant to play Cassandra to-night. Tell me, this Rose of yours occupies your mind utterly?"

"Well, I don't think about anybody else."

"John, you're not hurt by what I've said?"

"Not a bit, because I know you've only been saying it to help me."

"John, that is the sole reason. You must always believe that. I could not bear to think that one day you should look back at the two of us talking here in this quiet room on this evening of the first March of the new century and explain my motives otherwise."

"Of course not."

John felt that she was wanting him to say more than that; but the memory of what Elise had observed to him about Mrs Stern's friendship for himself recurred with a weight of embarrassment. He would do anything to avoid the slightest discussion of motives. Elise's idea had been fantastic, but nevertheless . . . nevertheless, what? Nevertheless, he was acutely aware almost to the point of discomfort of the isolation in which he and Mrs Stern were lapped around by this quiet London night.

"And now we must make a plan for me to meet your Rose. Why shouldn't I take a cottage for the Easter holidays somewhere in your countryside?"

There flashed across John's mind the very place—a thatched half-timbered cottage midway between Paxford and Milbourne. He had noticed a 'to let' board leaning over the gate under an arch of yew. Volunteering would easily provide him with an excuse to stay on himself at the Vicarage. The letters '*p.s.*' after his name in the Army List could wait for a month. Rose was going to stay with an aunt in London during May. He could 'pass schools' then. It would make the barrack-square at Chelsea and the rigours of a drill-sergeant of the Coldstream or Grenadiers a positively agreeable experience if Rose were near.

"But will Emil and Julius like being down in Loamshire for the Easter holidays?" he questioned.

"I'm sure they'll love it," Mrs Stern decided firmly on behalf of her sons.

And, although John was not aware of exercising the least subtlety by that question, he broke by it the dark charm of the March night and brought himself and Miriam Stern back into normal existence.

"You're going down to Loamshire to-morrow?" she asked.

"To-morrow evening. I'll bicycle over on Monday and find out about a cottage. I know of one about seven or eight miles from where I'm living. Would you come down as soon as school breaks up? That will be in about a fortnight. Easter Sunday is the seventh of April."

They parted in a pleasant atmosphere of holiday plans, and when John was gone Miriam Stern went up to her

elder son's room. He was reading *Das Kapital*, resting upon his elbow in bed.

"This is tremendous stuff, you know," he assured her.
"This is a revelation of the human mind."

"I wonder if it is," said his mother. "I used to know Karl Marx when I first came to London as a girl. He was always kind to children and cats. The Marxes used to live in a dreary little house in a dull small street somewhere in Haverstock Hill. He seems to me a very large man as I look back at him, a large man with a very large head and a mass of dust-coloured hair like Struwwelpeter. And there was a daughter Eleanor who was always called Pussie—no, no, not Pussie, Tussie. She had frizzy hair, too, like her father's. Poor Eleanor, she ran away with a man who had left his wife, and then he deserted Eleanor, and she killed herself. In spite of the kindness of Mr and Mrs Marx it was a sad household. Tussie was almost the last child left of a large family most of whom had died young when the Marxes were living in great poverty in Soho years earlier. Yes, it was a sad household."

"But you never read *Das Kapital*?" Emil pressed.

"No, I don't think I'm much interested in economic revolutions . . . they won't cure the emotional muddles of humanity, will they? Emil," she went on abruptly, "I've just been suggesting to John that we should spend your next holidays down in Loamshire."

"You want to see this girl, eh?" Emil asked, darting at her a bright glance.

"Yes, I should like to meet her. Wouldn't you, my dear?"

Emil closed *Das Kapital* with a thump and lay back on his bed staring at the gas-moon on the ceiling.

"I don't see why we should mix ourselves up with this business," he said at last. "John is moving away from us steadily all the time. Certainly, in my heart I never thought he would move in any other direction. Last year when I was a year younger . . ."

"Poor old gentleman!"

He brushed aside her raillery with an impatient, yet somehow not in the least a discourteous gesture.

"Last year I played with the romantic notion of a perfect union between a Gentile and a Jew, a union so perfect that the incompatibility of centuries would at last be wiped out. But I misjudged him. I thought that he had depths, but I don't believe there are any depths in John."

"Northern blood like his makes for a protracted development. If he matured with your speed, Emil, he would not be the John we love."

"Whom *you* love, *ma mère*. I no longer love him. It is perfectly clear that he is going to take the conventional road of the average young Englishman. Whether he marries this new girl or not doesn't matter. He will be for ever searching to find his *alter ego* in that kind of girl. I could tell that from our talk to-night. He talked about this girl in the way English people of his kind talk about nature. To such an Englishman nature means a simple landscape with all the denizens of which they are familiar. The first cuckoo, the first swallow, the nightingale in May, the song of the robin in September, that wild west wind which is the breath of autumn's being. But we're moving swiftly toward a world in which all that kind of agreeable triviality will no longer mean anything at all. In another year there will hardly be an emotion, an ambition, or an

interest which John and I shall share in common. Why then should we keep up this pretence of friendship?"

"Emil, this sounds not unlike the very familiar old emotion of jealousy."

"You say that because you yourself are feeling jealous of this girl, *ma mère*. Now don't look at me as if I were an *enfant terrible*. If John is old enough for you to fall in love with him, I am old enough to tell you that you are in love with him. And, mother, who else is to tell you?"

"There is something inhuman about you, Emil."

Miriam Stern hoped that the pleasure he gave her by his recognition of her feeling for John was well concealed. She railed at herself for being as absurdly gratified by it as a schoolgirl, but she could not help it.

"Or excessively human," her son added.

She knew she ought to deny the assertion; but she could not bring herself to do so. She found a way out with a quibble.

"I'm not in love with him, though I admit that . . ."

Emil was too quick for her.

"That you love him."

"I'd really rather that you did not talk about it, Emil. You can rely upon me not to make myself foolish or undignified."

"Well, naturally, I know that, or I should not have said anything," he assured her. "I wish I could have the experience of falling in love with a woman like you. I wonder what you would feel about it if I did."

"I wish you could fall in love with a woman old enough to transfer to you her knowledge of human nature. Indeed, I wish you could fall in love with some girl in the old-fashioned way of youth."

Emil flung *Das Kapital* to the foot of the bed, and leaned back, nursing his head in his hands, and staring up at the ceiling.

"That I shall never do. The very thought of girls fills me with rage."

"But why with rage?"

"Oh, I don't know, they're such hopeless brakes on progress. All women are. Well, perhaps not all women, but such a huge majority as to make the generalization sound enough. And if ever they show signs of progressive ideas it is always for the wrong reasons. However, I suppose their mental coma wouldn't irritate me if they were not physically so abhorrent. All that softness . . ."

"It won't do for me to suggest that you may think quite differently three or four or five years hence. Perhaps you won't, in any case. Still, not even the most understanding of mothers can avoid feeling a little dismayed at the thought that she has been responsible for bringing into the world a not perfectly normal male."

"I'm not reproaching you," Emil interposed.

"I understand that. What I dread is that one day you may reproach me. I wish I had known more people who were constituted like you. I am speaking from intuition rather than experience when I say that I am sure they are seldom happy."

"Don't bother about me. I've made up my mind to frame my life in such a way that I can shut passion out of it."

"A bold decision!"

"It could only be achieved by a bold decision. The more difficult it is to carry out, the easier will it be for me to defeat my own weakness. You know that I was as

madly in love with John as in one way of love anybody could be. Much of last year was an agony to me. I was being burnt up by desire. I ached perpetually with jealousy. Never to the end of my days shall I feel the least sensitiveness over the attitude of the world to the Jew, for all that could be suffered from such sensitiveness I have suffered already, since at the back of my mind I was always convinced that had I not been a Jew he might have responded. I was sick with thwarted hope when he had that absurd infatuation for that first girl; but it was the beginning of the cure, for when at Fontainebleau he confided to me about his having slept with some French café concert girl I recognized that it was not because I was a Jew that he could not love me, but because he was normal. You see, he was quite famous at school for his affairs with other boys, and I did not realize that this was the normal course of adolescent vitality, the mere exuberance of a healthy youth. With John it was not even the temporary bisexuality you often see in adolescents. He just took his boys as a right to which he was entitled by the prowess of schoolboy personality, which you know is very like the prowess of a Diomed or an Achilles or any other Homeric figure. In a way I shall be sorry when public-school education is reformed and such an Homeric existence is destroyed. But that's by the way. Well, when I realized John was normal, and could never love like myself for that reason, I recovered from this sickness. As you know, *ma mère*, when you look back at being in love it is very much like looking back at chicken-pox or measles."

"Is this intended as a warning by an experienced old gentleman to ladies approaching middle-age?" Miriam Stern asked.

"No, no, no. I'm not suggesting that our cases are parallel. If you want me to be sincere, I'll tell you straight out that I do think it's a little ridiculous for a woman of your intelligence to suppose she is in love with a youth like John Ogilvie, but . . ."

"Yes, but unfortunately, dearest Emil," his mother interposed, "the last faculty which has any effective say in the question of love is the intelligence."

"Precisely, and it was just the consciousness of that which pulled me together. I want to see the world ruled by intelligence instead of by emotion as it is at present. And if I can master emotion while I am still young, think what a difference that will make to me in the future."

"As long as you are sure of being able to master emotion without destroying the ability to feel . . . but that will also be decided in the future," she added, with a sigh for her own thoughts. "In any case, Emil, do not bother about me. You will not find your mother incapable of managing her emotions with the dignity she owes to her elder son.

"You need not be sarcastic," he said, smiling. "After all, it's only because I am your son that I feel any confidence in my own strength of mind. And, *maman*, since we have both loved the same person, doesn't that prove we have more in common than even our relationship might warrant us in supposing?"

"Yes, Emil, but the difference between us is that although I have decided I will not allow myself to regard John as anything except a friend in order not to make myself ultimately ridiculous for certain, and ridiculous at once in all probability, I am not therefore going to regard his friendship as nothing. And I shall repeat that your

intention to break up your friendship with John is a sign that you have not conquered what is probably the most influential emotion of all—jealousy.”

“But I am not going to break up this friendship deliberately. I was simply confiding in you my knowledge that it could not last. John and I must diverge further and further away from one another. We differ too profoundly in essentials. I have a positive creed. I believe in mankind. I do not believe in God. John wants to believe in God, and if he finally succeeds in persuading himself that he does that will put us still further apart. In fact we shall be living to all practical purpose on two different planets. An emotional bond between us might have been strong enough to hold us together in spite of mental divergences. I have realized the impossibility of such an emotional bond. I have accepted it. Surely it would be as false a sentimentality to play with our friendship as it would be for a young mother to prefer playing with dolls instead of looking after her living children? You have nothing except the difference of your age between you and John to bother about.”

“It is enough,” said Miriam.

“Yes, for a love affair between you and him; but the difference need not interfere with your friendship. In one way he satisfies your maternal emotions much better than either Julius or myself. Actually you understand him better than you understand either of us. Julius is beyond even me at present, though I’m inclined to think that if he lives he will become fairly ordinary. I don’t see any sign of creative genius in him, but I think it’s too soon to give a positive opinion.”

“And you are a creative genius?” his mother asked.

"Yes, I think I probably am. I fancy I am an early example of the way genius will manifest itself in the new age. You still think of genius in terms of past achievement and aspiration. It is bound up with art in your mind. Now I believe that art is finished, or at any rate the art of the Occidental epoch which began with the Renaissance. I may be only a forerunner of the new epoch born so far from my own real time as to be passed over as a mere eccentric. On the other hand, if we look at history we seem able to discern a kind of general law that new epochs are heralded by mighty events, and I feel in my bones that we are now on the verge of mighty events and that I shall have a chance to use my genius practically in my own time."

"In what way?"

"Oh well, unless I know what the events are it's impossible to answer that question. But, to express myself roughly, I hear myself as a voice expressing a vast group-consciousness. I think that the genius of the future will be expressions in one individual of vast groups. The artistic genius of the past has expressed himself as an individual, and the more potent the genius the more potent his influence over the mass mind: but progress has developed the mass mind to such an extent that it is beginning to demand influence over individuals instead of surrendering to being influenced by them, and the genius of the future will be the servant not the master of that mass mind. The fact is that humanity is becoming convinced of the futility of looking for another existence after death which is to compensate for the failure of mortal life to guarantee happiness and comfort to the great majority of human beings, and in abandoning the

superstition of immortality humanity is being gradually fired with a determination to make the best of this world for everybody in it."

"But wasn't all this yeast rising over a century ago—before the French Revolution? What were Danton or Marat or Robespierre except the expressions of a mass mind?"

"They were in the long line of popular tribunes. There is less difference than in their names between Marius and Marat. They were individuals first. The voices of the new age will not be individuals. I suppose the nearest I can get to express what I conceive they will be is to call them mediums."

"A dangerous word to use, dear Emil, when we consider its associations. But I have a glimmering idea of what you are getting at. Have you talked to John about these speculations of yours?"

"What is the good of talking about humanity to somebody who is convinced that the whole of humanity is expressed by a girl with blue eyes?"

"Well, let us humour this luckless survivor from the romantic past," said Miriam Stern, and the smile behind the words but softened her voice without so much as puckering for an instant the corners of her mouth. "I suggested to John that we might spend our next holidays in a cottage not far from Milbourne."

"So that you can be magnanimous," her son commented sharply.

"So that Spring can be old-fashioned," she corrected. "I have given you to the future, Emil. Let me give myself to the past. Besides . . . O lieb, so lang du lieben kannst."

Thus it befell that on many days during that April John and Rose were together.

Everything had run with such smoothness that John was often suspicious of what the envious gods might be holding in store for him. His father and Elise had gone off to St Jean de Luz where the barrister felt his golf would not be as conspicuously bad as at Wimbledon and where Elise would be able to drink in Atlantic zephyrs, and drowse in the sun after heather-scented walks for the benefit of the child that was coming. Mr Damson had been delighted to agree that John should stay on at the Vicarage now and go up to London in May to take a Volunteer officer's course at Chelsea. The owner of Lowes Cottage, the widow of an A.R.A. dead these ten years, was equally delighted to feel that by letting it she was entitled to pay a visit to her sister at Torquay. The cottage itself on the outskirts of the diminutive hamlet of Lowes was really three heavily thatched cottages turned into one by the late Walter Hipwell, with a red-tiled studio built on, the windows of which looked out through the blossom of tumbledown gnarled fruit trees to a sleepy stream winding through meadows. In front was a carefully tended small garden, bright with alyssum and arabis, the borders fluttering with daffodils in the April wind.

"My god, look at these pictures!" Emil had exclaimed, standing in an ecstasy of disgust before Oriental maidens carrying pitchers and serenading Spaniards and tarantella-dancing Neapolitans and all the highly coloured souvenirs

of Mediterranean scenery with which the later Victorians tried to relieve the stuffiness of their domestic interiors.

"Don't look at them, you ass," Julius had advised.

"We'd better take them down," Emil had suggested.

"No, no," had come from Mrs Stern. "We might not be able to put them back properly, and I should hate to hurt old Mrs Hipwell's feelings. She has been so extremely obliging."

"Then we'll turn them round with their faces to the wall."

"But I don't think that an ugly emptiness is any improvement on an ugly fullness. So let us leave well alone."

It was in this studio snowbound by pear-blossom that before this crudely coloured population of motionless serenaders with mute guitars, of immobile dancers with castanets unclapped and tambourines untapped, the love of John and Rose woke from ecstasy to passion. John had felt a little doubtful of the reception that a family like the Sterns would be given at Medlicott Hall. He foresaw them in those time-shaded rooms like gloxinias in a Loamshire lane. The return of Ralph Medlicott from Winchester to the dulcitude of home did not allay John's misgivings. At this date perhaps the only human creatures capable of withstanding with dignity the stony superiority of a Winchester man of fifteen were Winchester men of sixteen and seventeen. Whether even Winchester will survive the twentieth century's revolution of manners is as yet a subject for speculation, but if Winchester change the quintessence of England will be undiscoverable to future Englishmen.

"It fascinates me," Emil had exclaimed when he and

John were bicycling back from his first visit to Medlicott Hall. "I begin to understand now why rich Jews yearn to become country gentlemen."

"You and Ralph Medlicott amused me," John had laughed. "It was like an interview between Clive and some young Oriental potentate with whom he was seeking an alliance."

"I liked him," the other had admitted. "There must be texture as well as design for a decent wallpaper. There was no lincrusta about that youth, which was very pleasing. Most of our people at St James's who try to exist in beautiful indolence when they are not playing games are just embossed wallpaper."

John was too much relieved by the friendly reception of Emil Stern at Medlicott Hall to argue about Winchester. Mrs Medlicott had been cordial. No doubt Ralph had conveyed to her his own approval, and it was Ralph who better than any member of the family understood how to influence Mrs Medlicott. She told Emil to let his mother know that she was anxious to call upon her. Two days later the Medlicott brougham stopped by the yew-arched gate of Lowes Cottage. Mrs Medlicott was accompanied by Rose, to whom Mrs Stern was charming. When the brief visit was over John turned to Mrs Stern.

"Oh, John," she laughed. "John, did ever eyes ask a question with such pathetic eagerness? . . . you have the same expression as my beloved spaniel Don used to have when he was wondering if I were going to take him for a walk. Forgive me, John, for laughing, and let's go into my little room. Emil and Julius will be back presently for tea."

They left the studio, and presently were sitting, on

either side of a hobgrate, in wide-winged grandfather-chairs covered with a faded cherry and brown chintz.

"Stir the fire, John. There's a sting in the wind this afternoon. I hope the blossom won't all be spoilt."

The sun had been shining when John had escorted Rose and her mother to the carriage; but now the bitter rain was beating against the lattice-window of this tiny room which was almost filled by the two chairs.

"It's strange how the mind of a woman like that," Mrs Stern went on, "can give substance to so fugitive an occasion as a call. I felt as she passed out of the door that if I turned round I should see an egg upon the mat. Yet I confess that women so utterly characteristic as that do attract me. There is something satisfying about their representativeness. Perfection, even of absurdity, is always satisfying. We have learnt to tire of Praxiteles and Guido Reni and of Raphael himself, but we should beware of being unable to appreciate all perfection. You know, within the space of that call I was aware of the whole of our respective histories. I was seeing some lanky long-toothed Norman kneeling before the priest with a flaxen-haired Saxon bride; I was seeing a procession of woman after woman in mediæval wimples and sugar-loaf hats, in Elizabethan farthingales and Caroline *décolleté* and Queen Anne pinners and paduasoys and Regency muffs and Victorian crinolines and bustles, with Mrs Medlicott's fair pompadour of the present bringing up the rear ; and I was seeing myself like Ivanhoe's Rebecca and Shylock's Jessica and Leah after Leah in the ghettos of central and eastern Europe. And though this may be the first year of the twentieth century I was saying to myself that she and I were still as remote from one another as when her

ancestors were fighting with their bronze swords in the dark north and mine in Palestine were much the same as my people are now, even although now they are dispersed over the globe, dispersed . . . dispersed. . . .”

“But you didn’t feel like that about Rose? You were so sweet to her.”

“I think your Rose is delicious, John, and I think I am odious for teasing you.”

“She liked you tremendously.”

“What did she say, John?”

Now what Rose had actually said was, ‘I think Mrs Stern is ripping’, but John did not feel that this was an adequate comment on which to build the absorbing discussion for which the egotism of enamoured youth was longing.

“Well, a girl like her doesn’t know how to express the kind of fascination you obviously had for her. But she did like you tremendously. Did you . . . did you really like her? I mean, do you understand why I am so madly in love with her?”

“I should be an extremely unimaginative woman, John, if I could not understand your being in love with a beautiful girl.”

This was altogether too vague for John. He did not want to discuss an abstraction of femininity.

“But you don’t think that Rose is just a beautiful girl and nothing more?” he pressed. “You’re not disappointed in her, after what I told you about her?”

“Not in the least disappointed, John. I think she will be the perfect match for you if—but oh, John, it’s a very big if—if you can weather what must inevitably be a long wearing engagement, and what will be more difficult a

secret troth at first, for I cannot believe Mrs Medlicott will agree for a long while even to an open engagement. And the worst of it is that the more perfect the match you are for one another the more difficult you will both find it."

And then to Miriam Stern's relief the boys came in. She had not found the complete preoccupation of John with somebody else quite so easy to accept without heartsickness as she had persuaded herself it would be.

One day in that April, and never had April been so exquisitely the April of English poets as this year, there was an expedition to gather primroses in Harting wood which lay beyond the orchard, beyond the water-meadows, on the edge of the undulating country that rolled away from Lowes to a far skyline. Ann Medlicott was with her sister, slim and fair as a pulled skein of raw silk. She had been captivated in the way of her fourteen years by the gipsy darkness of Julius whom she had converted from butterfly-chasing to the better rewarded pastime at this season of birds'-nesting. She was sure that if they searched the woodland they would find an early nightingale's nest. Their eager chatter died away behind the tree-trunks closing in upon their progress. They had been gone about a quarter of an hour when Emil flung down upon the grass of the ride, where the others were sitting in the windless sunshine, a bunch of primroses as large as the heart of a cauliflower.

"I'll bet that plausible rascal Disraeli never picked so many primroses in the whole of his life," he declared.

His mother suggested that he and she should go and look for Julius and Ann. They too were lost behind tree-trunks. John and Rose were left together in the empty ride.

A small bird with yellowish breast slipped through the budding hazels.

"Now was that a wood-warbler or a willow-wren?" John asked.

From the coppice came the bird's call.

"A *chiff-chaff*," he decided. "It always does turn out to be a *chiff-chaff*!"

The persistent monotonous call continued for a while. Then it stopped abruptly, and the silence of the woodland was of a midsummer noon.

Their eyes met: their lips touched.

She was wearing a light green frock, almost of the same shade as the primrose leaves round the great bunch she held in her lap.

"My lovely one, you are April herself to-day," he murmured in a low voice shaken by emotion at her beauty.

She smiled with her lips; but her eyes were remote as the blue of hills along a far horizon.

"Rose of my heart, if we could live for ever in this wood!"

"I think I should like it."

"Would you, my treasure?" he asked eagerly.

And in the way of young lovers since the world began he told her the story of that home of theirs in the fairy future, and foolish enough no doubt the tale would sound if set down here. Yet when it was told upon that April day long ago it sounded to her who listened sweet and wild as the birdsong of dawn outside her window. This very morning she had stood by that window to watch the thrushes run with dew-spangled feet across the grass, appearing large as partridges in the cold glimmer of day-

break; and back in bed as she lay peeping for the earliest flash of the sun to light up the framed photograph of her first pony she had fallen asleep again on a drowsy vision of John's face bending over her out of a silver frame of birdsong. She wished she could tell him this now; but she was growing somehow shyer and shyer of him.

"You would not grow tired of such a life? You would not want anything more than just to live in a wood with me and two dogs and a horse?"

"No, I'd never grow tired of it," she affirmed.

"What do you think your mother would say if I told her we were in love with one another and that we wanted to be openly engaged?"

"I think she'd forbid me to see you any more."

"But why?"

"She'd say we were too young to be engaged and that people would begin to talk about us."

"Surely your mother can afford to pay no attention to country gossip? It's really ridiculous the way we chain up our lives with other people's opinions. And what amuses me is that it's all theoretical. These people of whom we are so much afraid never dare criticize us to our faces. They may mutter scandal over teacups behind drawn curtains, but if they actually meet us the last word they will breathe is a word of criticism. At school I used to worry over what people were saying, but at least it was open criticism there, and I soon found that if you went your own way the criticism stopped."

"I wouldn't care what people said about me, John; but I wouldn't like to worry mother. And it would worry her if she heard people were beginning to talk about you and me."

"People! People!" he apostrophized. "I wonder where the others are."

The woodland answered with silence; but the mention of people had populated that silence with hidden critics of their behaviour. They feared now even to sit too close to one another in that empty ride lest peeping woodman or gamekeeper should see them and carry the news over the shire.

John tried to take up again the theme of that house in the wood where they were to live, but the magic had departed from it. The wood had become a thoroughfare. People were tramping through their paradise in ever increasing crowds, and what was worse stopping to peer in at the diamond-latticed casements and destroying the poetic seclusion of two young lovers in the grand tradition of romance. With so many impalpable figures trespassing upon their green privacy, it did not seem worth while to postpone for a few more uneasy minutes the return of the real people with whom they had set out upon this primrose-gathering expedition. However, the others did not return, and presently John suggested that they should go in search of them.

But Harting wood was apparently now empty of their presence. No sound of them was heard upon the primrose-powdered slopes or along the grassy rides: no sight of them was caught beyond oaken clump or green-misted spinney of young larches.

"They must have thought we'd gone back to the cottage," John declared. "We'd better move along."

So they hastened down through the woodland to the water-meadows, the emerald of which ever shifted as the slow shadows of the white April clouds moved across

them, and followed the banks of the stream to the orchard where the snow of the pear-blossom was beginning to be touched here and there with brown. Spring was hurrying past.

When they reached the cottage it was empty. Within the studio, where they went to watch for the others coming through the orchard, they sat as it were in a globe of crystal, so completely were they together for what was really the first time since they had met in the time of daffodils.

The serenaders and dancers, the Neapolitan fishermen and Venetian gondoliers, looked down upon them from their elaborately floriated frames. Through an open window came from the orchard the warm fluting of a newly arrived blackcap, the shriller burst of a chaffinch's impassioned song.

Their eyes met; but this time before their lips touched John had caught her to him and enfolded her in his arms. The bunch of primroses slipped from her limp hand, and soft as their fall upon the Persian rug was the softness of her when she seemed to shrink within him away from the inexorable pursuit of virginal passion. He fancied for an instant that she was nigh to fainting and held her from him anxiously to gaze at her whitened cheeks, on both of which flamed a patch of crimson. In holding her his hand was upon her breast.

"Look at me, Rose," he begged, for her lids were closed. She plucked feebly once or twice at the hand upon her breast. Then as if she could not bring herself to escape from so sweet a captivity she flung that puritan arm round him and drew him close and closer until their lips met in a kiss from which passion had torn the ethereal

mystery and awe of first love to reveal to both of them the secret of their being, to uncover their hidden desire for each other and to send their minds whirling ahead to face the grim problems of morality and the even grimmer problems of conventional behaviour.

"Do you mind my putting my hand there?" John whispered.

"No, but I suppose I ought to, oughtn't I?" she sighed in response.

The chaffinches in the orchard gave nature's answer in bursts of triumphant song, but John took refuge in a current sentimentality.

"Not if you really love me, my adored Rose. And you do love me?"

"John, I do, I do. John, my darling, I love you madly."

The birdsong in the orchard ceased suddenly, warily. People were coming.

"You could say you were tired," said John quickly. "Lie down on the divan. You're looking very white."

"But my cheeks are burning."

Passion brought subterfuge too.

"Come along then. We'll go round the other way, and meet them in the garden," he urged.

Later, when the Medlicott girls had ridden away from Lowes Cottage in the wood-smoke blue of the April dusk, Mrs Stern called John to stroll with her in the orchard for a while before supper. The pear-blossom was fluttering down. Blackbirds, noisy shadows, were everywhere. A thrush silhouetted against the dim afterglow of day was singing on the peak of an empty dovecot.

"And do you realize now, John, that a long engagement, and still worse a long secret understanding,

will be a heavier strain upon you both than you had supposed?"

"You mean . . ." he stammered.

"I mean," she interposed quickly, "that a woman is not easily deceived and that children grow up. Your Galatea has come to life."

"It was my fault."

"It was the fault of nobody except nature herself. But what you have awakened, John, you cannot put to sleep again."

"I have self-restraint."

"In this cool orchard, yes . . . in this cool orchard, talking to a woman old enough to be your mother, yes, very easily . . . but not so easily week in week out for year after year, and least easily of all when after you have been parted you are together again. And even if you restrain every expression of your love you cannot restrain the imagination of what that expression would mean to you."

"Then what shall I do?" John asked miserably. "Marriage is out of the question yet for a long time. We shall be lucky enough if we are married when we are twenty-one. Perhaps you think I ought to give her up, Mrs Stern?"

"No, no, John, I'm not suggesting that. I'm merely trying to make you realize that the immediate future before you is not quite so easy as you thought it would be. Come along. The candlelight is twinkling in our little dining-room."

Foolish boy, blind to what I could give you now in these April dews, to what I could give you to-night when my casement under the eaves will glow with moonshine. With me you could be at peace, and I would not cling to you, John, when

the time came to let you go. I would choose the exact moment to change our relationship to that of friends. And what friends we could be! I who would have had the bounty of your young love could watch you for the rest of our lives without jealousy, and so in a perfection of intimacy we could stay friends always. There would be no secrets between us since we would already have yielded each to the other the secrets of love. As we are now I am too remote from you, John. You even suppose that you could shock me.

Foolish boy? Ten times more foolish woman! You should have forgotten your dignity last summer at Fontainebleau. It is too late now.

"Too late now," she repeated aloud.

"Too late for what?"

"Too late for wandering about in this damp grass when supper is waiting for us. You are very patient with my maternal fussiness, John dear. But it was impossible for me not to notice this afternoon that you and your Rose had passed on to another stage in your journey of love. And you were afraid you would frighten her with your masculine brutality . . . and John, when we came in this afternoon she was as pale herself as a primrose. But it was not fear, John. When children wake from sleep they wake flushed. The older we grow the paler do we wake from sleep. And this afternoon you waked her from her last childish sleep."

Oh, why, why must I continue to torment myself with these two young lovers? I am giving them the importance of Adam and Eve.

"Supper is waiting and I'm jolly hungry," Julius was calling from the cottage. "Aren't you two ever coming in this evening?"

"I was looking at Venus sinking down behind the woods, and listening to that favourite thrush of mine."

"Ann Medlicott thought we shouldn't have much chance of finding a nightingale's nest with eggs before we go back to London."

"Yes, you'll be going back in a fortnight now," said John, thinking how difficult it would be presently to find himself alone with Rose. "You'll manage for me to see as much as possible of her while you are still here?" he asked Mrs Stern impulsively as they reached the door of the cottage.

She was grateful for his dependency, and smiled her promise to help him.

But the next day came word that her husband's brother was lying seriously ill in a London hospital, and the duties of kinship overrode everything else. They must go back to London at once.

"You'll be thinking hard things of me, John," she said to him wistfully. "But family claims are terribly strong with us Jews, and it would be unforgivable if we stayed here."

John tapped the barometer in the hall of the Vicarage after he had returned from seeing off the Sterns. The glass seemed steady. As long as the weather kept fine it would not be so difficult to see Rose alone. But in wet weather? It would not be so easy in wet weather. And the years grew longer before him. He saw himself, time after time innumerable, riding along the drive through Medlicott Park, now powdered with winter's snow, now deep with the bracken of summer, now windswept by the warm south-west, sun-burnished, rain-drenched, at dusk, at noon, now frosted and silent beneath a starry sky, now

dripping mournfully in the white fogs of autumn, now hawthorn-heavy in May or bluebell-dimmed in the front of June. He saw himself, time after time innumerable, pushing his bicycle through the wicket in the stable-yard gate and leaning it against the wall of a small coachhouse abandoned to bicycles, except for the governess-cart which was still used for picnics and still pulled by that ancient white pony which looked like outliving the youth of all this present generation of Medlicotts. He saw the fantail pigeons flutter lazily up to the roof of the stables, and the great clock over the archway at the far end, and the bell in the tower, and a groom in shirtsleeves with a bucket. He saw the footman slipping like a fish through the cool depths of the hall to admit him, time after time innumerable. He saw the green sunlight upon the oriels of the library, and Rose coming to greet him, now through the heavy oaken door, now across the lawn outside hurrying slightly and then falling back so as not to reach the house too far in advance of the footman who had come to announce John's arrival, for that would still have been unladylike in those days. And sometimes he saw Rose descending the wide stairs before he reached the library. Those were the best meetings, for the footman would vanish as quietly and quickly as a fish, and they would go together through the oaken door into the library. The long low library would be empty, and there they would be safely imparadised in one another's arms until the dipping flight of a bird past the mullioned windows would cleave them like the shadow of the world's sword. He saw himself, time after time innumerable, watched by Mrs Medlicott's kingfisher-blue eyes across the silver kettle and wondering whether she was concerned about

the future of Rose and himself. He saw himself sitting on with the Squire over the port in the high panelled Caroline dining-room and hardly able to pay even the semblance of attention to tales of fox and farm and Radical malevolence, because he was counting the very seconds with Rose of which her father's geniality was robbing him, with Rose in that small Georgian drawing-room papered with Chinese pheasants and strange foliage. He saw himself, time after time innumerable, chattering rural small talk while he wondered if he should be successful in choosing the moment of departure that would grant him the chance to kiss Rose good night. Would so much anxiety endure for very long? Would the hour ever strike when he could claim her company as a right?

The Easter holidays came to an end. Ann went back to school. Ralph went back to Winchester. Mr Damson's pupils returned to the Vicarage. The cowslips were in their prime.

Yet the sweet season was passing John and Rose by. That was the fault of the change in their emotional relationship. What each now recognized in the other both feared would be recognized by the rest of the world. The dread of gossip that would reach the ears of her family made Rose afraid to risk any secret meetings, and John was still romantically enough in love to find a satisfaction in deferring to these scruples. Yet romantic satisfaction did not compensate for the pangs of corporeal deprivation. John's youth lay in the gap between two

periods. He was able to criticize the Victorian discipline of respectability, but the influence of a childhood spent under the sway of that respectability would not allow him to break completely clear of it. That ability to face hard physical facts which was to distinguish the youth of the next generation was beyond his imagination. Physical facts were still ugly. Girls in your own station of life whom you hoped to marry were not seduced. Indeed the seduction even of girls of a lower station in life was an offence against the code of a gentleman. Sexual intercourse with girls of your own station in life who had previously been seduced by cads meant that such girls had ceased to consider the possibility of marriage with anybody. Sexual intercourse with a girl of a lower station in life than your own who had been previously seduced by some cad was recognized as your prerogative, but you had to remember your gentlemanly obligations by being careful not to put her in the family way, which would mean that in order to consider yourself still a gentleman you would have to marry the girl and in doing so cut yourself off for ever from the society of gentlemen luckier than yourself.

The incident which had revealed to John and Rose that they desired each other did not reveal to them at the same time that the greater freedom which an engagement would confer upon them to play with fire would be a strain, to cope with which must be beyond their power. Neither of them grasped, and if either of them had grasped it, neither of them would have admitted that the basis of their love was now predominantly physical. The modern psychologist would argue that it always must have been; but at one stage in the development of society this

physical basis was successfully sublimated, when the great imaginative loves of the Middle Ages transcended bodily desire.

Within the womb, in a darkness thick as the backward abyssm of time, the human foetus passes through the evolutionary process which led to the creation of man. From the moment that a wail announces the creature's achievement of life every infant proceeds on the way to full manhood by a series of mental and emotional developments which show forth the previous history of humanity. These may vary with the individual (and the extent of masculine variety is much wider than feminine) but the process of history is apparent in everybody. For instance, the mind of the normal European schoolboy of ten works like that of a mature savage, and thus he passes on through phase after phase during the miniature existence of youth. In many cases the progress is only apparent. The physical externals of age supervene and with them the trappings of progress, but the mind ceases to develop, and the trouble is that unless this arrestation occurs early enough to make it obvious the value of an individual's experience is chiefly estimated by his age. Thus we find nineteenth-century minds administering twentieth-century states or eighteenth-century minds controlling and confusing twentieth-century finance.

In becoming aware that his Rose was a woman John passed from the mediæval ecstasy of first love to a later date in human history. That first rapture would never be his again; but by his experience of it he was individually as much enriched and enlarged as literature by the *Divina Commedia*. He would never love again without awareness of physical passion; but he was for ever safe against that

intellectual surrender to phallism which was presently to mark the reaction against the blinkered thought of the nineteenth century.

Half-way through May the nervous anxiety of stolen meetings in this sly and observant countryside were brought to an end by Rose's departure to London to stay with her grand-aunt, Lady Roker. John went home for his course on the square at Chelsea. He had heard alarming tales about the experiences of self-conscious young volunteer officers during this ordeal, but he found the sergeant-instructors amiable enough in reality and the drilling of guardsmen under their supervision a much easier business than he had expected. Meetings with Rose were not quite so easy.

Old Lady Roker was the widow of a Warwickshire baronet who being without the prospect of an heir had sold his property and invested his money in the City, as the expression used to run. His affairs had prospered, and when he died in the early 'seventies he had left his wife well off. The old lady (she was now drawing near to ninety) had been much shaken by the sudden leap up of the income tax to meet the expenses of the war in South Africa. A few pence in the pound had been the rate when her husband died. It was seeming to her in this spring of 1901 that she was very near to being ruined. To save herself from this she gave up buying envelopes or note-paper and by writing back to her relations crosswise on their own letters and readdressing and sticking up the envelopes with home-made paste she felt like a heroine of adversity. It was hoped by the Medlicotts that grand-aunt Roker would leave her money between Dick and Ralph with perhaps a dowry apiece for Rose and Ann.

Consequently for many years now the young Medlicotts had had to stay in turn with grand-aunt Roker at that large but extremely stuffy house in Portman Square, and when they were not staying with her to write to the old lady regularly once a week. Each in turn had fallen into disgrace with her. Dick at the age of ten had trodden on the tail of her yellow Persian cat. Ralph when twelve had knocked a Dresden shepherdess from the drawing-room mantelpiece into the grate to break the damsel's crook and chip one of her sheep. Rose had committed several crimes, the worst of which had been to entice a starving mongrel puppy into the house out of the Square and feed it with the digestive biscuits kept in a small silver keg on the immense mahogany sideboard in the dining-room. As for Ann, only last winter she had been convicted of leaving a great spatula of gas flaring away in her bedroom after she had gone down to dinner, and that at a time when grand-aunt Roker was faced by ruin. The best to be hoped after that was that Ann's dowry would pass to her brothers and not to some charitable institution which knew the value of money.

The windows of the house in Portman Square were so rarely opened that the accumulated genteel odours of the Victorian age clung to it—the faint smell of gas, the mustiness of old embroidery, stale lavender-water and eau-de-Cologne, hot roast beef, potpourri, Shetland shawls, seed-cake, sherry, soda-mint tablets, and damp ferns. The rumble of the traffic was so little audible behind the thick plate-glass of the windows as not to interfere in the least with the ticking of the numerous clocks even when they were covered with glass shades. There was one big clock in the hall which chimed every

quarter and sounded a carillon at the hour as if time itself slept in this house and had to be roused in such a fashion to remember it was passing. The servants were fat, old, and waxen-faced. No doubt Simkins the butler and Mrs Burge the housekeeper did occasionally take an afternoon or an evening out, emerging with a kind of dignified surreptitiousness from the area door and vanishing in the dusk upon their unimaginable excursions; but they seemed as integral a part of the house's construction as the mud-coloured pillars in the arched entrance-hall. Even Alice the kitchenmaid was over forty, preferring to wait until old Lady Roker passed on before she sought an engagement as a cook in what Mrs Burge promised should be the right sort of establishment, which meant just such another Victorian cavern as the house in Portman Square. Once, when Rose as a little girl was staying with her aunt, a nursery-maid had been imported to deal with the minor problems of youth, and this nursery-maid had been observed by Mr Simkins in conversation at the area gate with what Mr Simkins described as a flash-looking fellow up to no good. Ellen the nursery-maid was dismissed on the spot, and her services undertaken by Henson, the under-housemaid, who was then over forty and looked like a candle which had been left burning in a draught.

"Why has Ellen gone, Henson?" Rose had asked.

"Because girls are never any good in a house, Miss Rose."

"Why not, Henson?"

"Because why, Miss Rose, and now please stop kicking at the chair while I unbutton your gaiters."

"But I'm a girl, aren't I, Henson?"

"I hope you're a young lady, Miss Rose, and won't never forget it."

And nowadays plenty of people are still bewailing the happy days when servants like Henson were always easily available for the right kind of establishment. In 1901 Henson was head-housemaid and fifty-three years of age. She was paid £32 a year. She had saved in thirty-nine years of service £161 4s. 3d. When Lady Roker passed on she hoped for a legacy of twenty pounds. Then she and a sister who was head-housemaid in a house in Wigmore Street expected to retire and buy a sweetshop in the country town which in the days of crinolines they had left for the lifelong imprisonment of good service, left for getting up every morning at six and going to bed every night at ten, left for carrying hot water and emptying slops and making beds in houses whose builders did not consider that servants were human beings at all, left for a frowsy servants' bedroom in the roof of a five-storied house one hundred and three stairs up from a basement in which for most of the year the gas was burning, left for a continuous round of tasks varied by an afternoon off every other Thursday and an evening off every other Sunday. They had their privileges, no doubt. They had the right to complain if they were asked to do what was the job of one of their fellow-servants. They had the right to protest against being given cold meat too often. They had the right to make things as disagreeable for their juniors as once upon a time their own seniors had made things disagreeable for them. They could expect at Christmas a present of a length of print or a couple of aprons or even half a dozen new caps. They could congratulate themselves when they found themselves in the

service of people of rank and fortune, not because they were any more comfortable or any better paid or any less hard worked in such conditions, but because the rank and fortune of their masters shed upon themselves a pallid radiance. And, perhaps more important than anything to their spiritual and moral health, they were never wrong, or at any rate never wrong when they had once escaped from that juniority during which they were always wrong.

In a household like Lady Roker's in Portman Square where by 1901 nobody on the domestic staff had been employed for less than fifteen years the various personalities never very distinct had merged into one. House-keeper, lady's-maid, butler, cook, kitchen-maid, head-housemaid, and under-housemaid, formed a composite waxen monster which was at once infallible and impeccable. There was also a boy who cleaned the knives and boots and emptied garbage into the dustbin. This boy, fortunately for himself, was usually succeeded by another boy after three months. It was a long enough existence. He was neither infallible nor impeccable, and he was never for a moment allowed by the rest of the household to forget that fact.

While the domestic staff swam quietly about their work like muddy-fleshed carp in a pond the mistress of that house in Portman Square sat in her drawing-room like a sea-anemone in an aquarium tank, her attenuated fingers waving gently over solitaire or patience as the rays of the zoophyte wave gently with the water's slightest movement. Often she fell into an old woman's sleep, her chin buried in the silk which was too ample now for her shrivelling breast, and looked thus as flaccid and shapeless as the anemone left behind by the ebb of the tide. And in the

manner of an anemone she seemed able to ingurgitate the life of the household by which she was surrounded. One could fancy that humanity had passed away from this old woman and that by an excessive prolongation of her fleshly existence she had reverted to an earlier form of life. There was something repulsive in the way her servants cringed upon this exigent crone for the sake of the gold her carcass would one day yield, for the sake of that gold which was to gratify for each of them the petty ambitions of a dull mortality. Lady Roker had lived so long in this atmosphere of deference that she was no longer capable of imagining the possibility of another human creature's thinking or feeling or acting independently of herself. When Mrs Burge in black satin or chicken-headed Cummitt, her maid, read to her every day from *The Times* or *The Morning Post* about the doings of the world outside the house in Portman Square, Lady Roker used to sit back among her cushions and sniff at the incomprehensible stupidity of that world. For a long time she had recognized in Queen Victoria an egoism equal to her own and accorded to her as much respect as vanity accords to its own reflection in a mirror; but now that the Queen was dead she believed herself to be the only human being left with wisdom or even with common sense. And to express such wisdom she considered a sniff or a grunt sufficient.

"M' glasses, Burge!"

"Your ladyship's glasses."

"Simkins!"

"M'lady?"

"M' cane!"

"Cummitt! Put m' shawl straight. Cummitt! Cover me up with m' rug. Cummitt!"

"My lady?"

"You are breathing very heavily, Cummitt."

"I'm sure I beg pardon, m'lady. I had no intention of disturbing your ladyship."

"I shall not be at all pleased, Cummitt, if you catch one of those unpleasant colds of yours."

"Indeed, no, m'lady. I'll do my best not to, m'lady."

A sniff warned chicken-headed Cummitt that in claiming to do anything so superlative as a best she was incurring the ridicule of a being as immeasurably superior to herself as Lady Roker.

It was to this house in Portman Square that John came one Sunday afternoon in May to be inspected by the old lady, the first step toward the fulfilment of a grandiose plan he had conceived to have the company of Rose to himself for the best part of twelve hours. This triumph over time and the conventions of the period was to begin with dinner together at Romano's, to continue with a box at Covent Garden for *Tristan*, and to conclude with a dance at the Imperial Rooms, Kensington. Even for an engaged couple to propose such a programme of dissipation would hardly have been tolerated in 1901: for a young man to suggest involving in such a programme a young woman to whom he was not engaged was unimaginable. To achieve his plan John had enlisted the help both of Mrs Stern and of his stepmother. It was Elise who had secured for him two tickets for the dance which was being given on behalf of some fashionable charity, and it was Mrs Stern who had invited Rose to the dance to which she was not going and to the dinner which she was not giving.

Lady Roker had been extremely doubtful whether she

could allow her grandniece to go. There seemed to her many reasons for refusing, the strongest being the nervous anxiety of herself and the domestic staff of the house in Portman Square if they were left for a few hours unprotected against thieves by the bolts and chains which would have to be left undone and unfastened until Rose had let herself in with the latchkey. And the latchkey? Suppose it were lost? The notion that somewhere in London there would be somebody able to enter the house at any hour of the day was hardly to be borne with equanimity. Perhaps it would be more prudent to ask Simkins to sit up until Rose came home. Yet that was asking a great deal of Simkins. Simkins might not like it. Lady Roker herself might treat her butler like a slave; but she spoke of him as if he were an Oriental despot.

"Mrs Burge, do you think that Simkins would mind sitting up for Miss Rose?"

Mrs Burge had had a long experience of Lady Roker's methods. She knew by now the reply that was expected.

"I know Mr Simkins likes to get to bed as soon as possible after ten o'clock, my lady."

"There you are, Rose, I don't think we can ask Simkins to sit up . . . until . . . what time do you suppose this assembly will terminate?"

"Oh, not before five, Aunt Catherine," said Rose.

"Before what hour?" the old woman gasped. "When I went to assemblies in my young days we never dreamed of their lasting beyond midnight."

"Ah, but they began much earlier, I expect."

"They began about six, which does not seem to me particularly early, Rose."

"But this dance does not begin before ten, Aunt Catherine."

Lady Roker shook her head.

"In my opinion," she declared, "the world is turning upside down. Did you hear what I said, Burge? I said the world is turning upside down."

"I'm sure your ladyship is right."

"And inside out."

"There's no doubt about it, my lady."

"Well, I do not often use bad language, but I call going off to assemblies at ten o'clock and remaining there till four a beastly habit. Did you hear what I said, Burge?"

"Very well, my lady," replied the housekeeper gravely.

"Would you feel very nervous, Burge, if Simkins went to bed, and the front-door was left unbolted until five o'clock in the morning?"

"I think if Mr Simkins was to speak to the policeman on this beat and ask him to keep an extra special eye on us during the night it would be quite all right, my lady."

Rose darted a grateful look. Her aunt grunted. Mrs Burge took the opportunity of withdrawing.

"I see this Mrs Stern mentions that a Mr Ogilvie is to assist at this strange nocturnal entertainment, as he is apparently a friend of yours."

"Yes, Aunt Catherine. He lives near us at home."

"Your mother knows him then?"

"Oh yes, Aunt Catherine, very well indeed. He's often at our place."

Lady Roker winced.

"At Medlicott Hall I suppose you mean, my dear?" she said coldly. "Well, I should like to have an opportu-

nity of meeting this Mr Ogilvie. You can write him a little note and invite him to call next Sunday afternoon."

It was thus that John received his first love-letter from Rose. She had written to him before at the Vicarage, but for the sake of prudence these notes had never gone beyond the matter which occasioned them.

205 PORTMAN SQUARE,
W.
May 10.

My darling,

Are you glad that at last I have written that? Do you remember once in the schoolroom I wrote 'my darling' for you on a piece of paper and was afraid to let you keep it in case you lost it and somebody recognized my writing? You were so cross when I burnt it in the fire afterwards. But now you are in your own house I'm not afraid.

I think it will be all right about next Wednesday, the 16th. Grand-aunt Roker is being as fussy as usual, but thank goodness she doesn't seem to suspect what we really propose to do. The chief thing that's worrying me is that I've told her the dance doesn't begin till about ten, and now I'm afraid she'll be wondering why on earth I have to go out to dinner at half-past six!

Aunt Catherine wants you to come and call on her on Sunday. Perhaps you will be able to calm her down. She is a most frightful old survival. She's nine years older than the Queen was when she died. Don't write to me except 'Dear Rose'. I wonder if Mrs Stern would be a perfect angel and write again to Aunt Catherine and say what a frightfully long time it takes to get to

Hampstead in a four-wheeler, because Aunt Catherine thinks it's bad enough for a girl to drive alone in a four-wheeler. As for a hansom!!! She actually suggested that her maid, Cummitt, should escort me to Hampstead which she seems to think is still at the mercy of highwaymen.

It was so lovely seeing you yesterday at Mrs Stern's house. Two hours alone together! Oh, my darling, when shall we be married?

I hope I have got everything right, because when I see you I forget about everything else and become so stupid.

When Simkins gets the cab I'm to tell him to drive to Claremont Gardens and then when the driver has turned the corner I'm to tell him to drive to Romano's, and you'll be waiting outside for me. Can it really be true that we are going to be alone together all those hours? Fancy! I broke it to Aunt Catherine that I would not be back before five. But of course I let her suppose that Mrs Stern would bring me home. Oh, my darling, isn't it lucky that Aunt Catherine feels she can't afford to keep a carriage nowadays? I would have been sent in charge of her horrible old coachman Bagge who was the worst of all her domestics. Cummitt is not so bad though. She has promised to do my hair for me. I shall see you on Sunday, but for goodness' sake don't expect to see me alone for a moment. Aunt C. would have forty fits at the idea. Oh, John, nothing will happen will it to spoil Wednesday?

I have kissed the paper here where I've left a space.

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So on Sunday May 12th, John drove in a hansom through the empty Sabbath streets of London to the house in Portman Square. The infrequent omnibuses unhampered by the week-day traffic possessed the urgency and importance of stage-coaches. The day was fine enough to bring out the first straw hats, which seemed to dance like white butterflies among the sedate toppers. Well-moustachioed clerks in frock-coats walked with all the dignity they could manage beside perambulator or mailcart pushed by wives in trailing bell-bottomed skirts and with the hanging gardens of Babylon upon their heads. Lilac and hawthorn and laburnum were in rich blossom along St John's Wood, and in Marylebone the window-boxes were already gay with pink or red geraniums and white marguerites. The scarlet pillar-boxes were freshly painted. From the windows of the barracks in Albany Street lifeguardsmen leaned out in Sunday afternoon leisure, or on the pavements they swaggered long-legged, their girls in the new frills and flounces of their spring frocks clinging proudly to their scarlet sleeves. London was the echoing dream of itself that a fine Sunday afternoon always made it, and in Portman Square the lime-trees were in full fresh green.

Yet in the hall of Lady Roker's house when the May sunlight had been excluded by the heavy door it might have been any season, any day. Time within this heavy house moved like a slippared eunuch.

Top-hat in hand, John followed Simkins upstairs to the drawing-room and walked across a tract of Persian carpet to where Lady Roker, looking in her Shetland shawl like a bundle of dead twigs shrouded in snow, sat beside a great fire of Derbyshire Silkstone coal, the leaping

flames of which in opaline reflection upon the windowpanes mocked the pale azure of the sky above the roofs of the grimed houses on the other side of the Square. And Rose was sitting at her feet on a wide cane-seated stool. She was wearing a dress of flowered muslin which looked absurdly unreal against that roaring fire.

In the moment of becoming aware of Lady Roker's presence John was seized with a foreboding that her influence upon his future would be malign. At the back of his mind rang the words of the witch 'Rapunzel, Rapunzel, let down your hair'.

"Is this young Mr Ogilvie?" a voice creaked from the white Shetland shawl.

To hear that hated epithet from the lips of this aged hag gave it a significance which was sinister enough.

"And so you want my niece to gad off to this peculiar entertainment next week? Well, I suppose I'll have to let her go."

John risked a smile of relief at Rose, and was taken aback when Lady Roker said sharply:

"Yes, you may well grin, young gentleman."

"I was smiling because I was so glad that Rose is able to come."

"Very likely," the old lady sniffed.

After this John was put through a catechism about himself, about his family, about his present occupation, and his plans for the future, in the course of which he was given to understand plainly that Lady Roker had a profound contempt for the manners, morals, and abilities of modern youth. In books when old ladies talked like this the hero usually scored heavily by standing up to them. John debated the wisdom of standing up to Lady

Roker, but decided that the risk was too great. Books were books. Real life usually worked out differently.

"Well, well," said the old lady at last, "as far as I can see, you don't seem to be much more than a schoolboy, and I'm surprised your father lets you gad around the way he does."

"You were worrying, Aunt Catherine . . ." Rose began.

"Worrying? I never worry, child. Though I have enough to worry about with the way taxation is rising. I'll be in the poorhouse yet before I die."

"You were wondering, Aunt Catherine, why I should have to start so early, but it takes a long time to drive to Hampstead, doesn't it, John?"

"Oh, it takes hours in a four-wheeler," John agreed.

"Bah!" ejaculated the old lady. "I often used to drive to Hampstead in the days when I could afford to keep a carriage and pair, and it never took *me* hours. But I wash my hands of this lunatic business. In my young days we went to balls and assemblies at a Christian hour. And young women like m'niece never dreamed of going out to dinner first. The world is upside down, young gentleman. Volunteers drilling with the Guards, eh? I never heard such impudent nonsense in my life. I'll be bound the Queen knew nothing of such pretentious monkey-tricks. No, nor the old Duke of Cambridge neither. We'll have the militia on sentry-duty outside Buckingham Palace yet."

So for another half-hour Lady Roker railed at the degenerate age into which she had survived until John rescued his top-hat from beneath his chair and prepared to make his exit.

"I'll see you at the Sterns on Wednesday, Rose."

She nodded, and they shook hands with extreme formality.

After John had walked some distance on his way back to Hampstead the right comparison for Lady Roker's hand when he held it for a moment in farewell occurred to him. It was like a piece of loofah. He laughed aloud, and a passing guardsman looked round indignantly under the impression that John was laughing at the new Brodrick cap he was wearing. These caps still struck the man in the street as ludicrous after the pill-boxes on the head of the military to which he was accustomed and which were still in general use.

At six o'clock on that Wednesday evening John was standing outside Romano's restaurant in the Strand. In the left-hand pocket of his white waistcoat was the ticket of the box in the top tier he had booked for *Tristan*, in the right-hand pocket were the tickets for the dance at the Imperial Rooms, Kensington. He was wearing for the first time an opera hat. He was wearing, too, white kid gloves, and there was another pair for the dance in the tails of his coat. The westering sun was blazing in a golden fume above Charing Cross, but from the direction of Temple Bar an east wind was blowing sharply. Down the narrow Strand the omnibuses at this crowded hour of the day were moving along at a walking pace, with an occasional five minutes of congested cessation altogether —red omnibuses going to Hammersmith, blue omni-

buses going to Fulham, white omnibuses going to Putney, green omnibuses going to Victoria, yellow omnibuses coming up from Whitehall bound for Camden Town, chocolate omnibuses, maroon omnibuses, orange omnibuses, violet omnibuses. Sixpenny lilac tickets, fivepenny buff tickets, fourpenny green tickets, threepenny pink tickets, twopenny blue tickets, penny white tickets thick as confetti by the edge of the pavement. Double stamp and double ring of the conductors to start. Piccadilly, Sloane Street, High Street, Broadway! Piccadilly, Sloane Street, Brompton Road, Putney Bridge! Piccadilly, Sloane Street, King's Road, World's End! The conductors of the empty omnibuses going eastward hardly bothered to shout: they were keeping their breath for the morning when the westward-going omnibuses would be silent.

John began to feel self-conscious under the glances of the big commissionaire outside Romano's. He decided to risk Rose's premature arrival and stroll a short way along the Strand. At the Lowther Arcade he turned aside from the crowded street to look at the windows of the toyshops in the dingy glass-shaded quiet within. Then he had a sudden conviction that Rose had arrived at Romano's and was now standing bewildered in the gilded entrance-hall. So he pushed his way back against the tide of people surging westward along the pavement and found to his relief that Rose had not arrived. Or had she arrived while he had been marking time in the Lowther Arcade and in dismay at not finding him gone back to Portman Square? His face must have reflected the stress of his emotion, for the big commissionaire asked him if she was late.

"No, I'm early," John explained, blushing. "There wasn't much traffic on the route I drove by."

"Came along pretty quick, sir, eh? That's always the way of it when you aren't pressed. But something 'll have to be done about this traffic, and no mistake about it. A proper disgrace it is to London. Last night about this time there was a block further along by Terry's Theatre, and which without a word of a lie was twenty blooming minutes by the clock. Well, I mean to say where are we when . . . excuse me, sir, one minute."

The commissionaire broke off to hold a basket shield over the wheel of a hansom with one hand and with the other assist to the pavement a beauty of the Gaiety chorus, a tall blonde who with a lace parasol guarded across the pavement the creamy roses of her complexion against any malefic rays lingering in the early evening sunshine.

"Did you book your table?" he asked of John when the beauty was safely inside and the hansom had moved slowly away. "Ah, you have. That's all right, because with the season well on us we're very full before the theatres now."

It was a quarter to seven when Rose arrived. The commissionaire, whom by that time John felt as if he had known all his life, hurried forward to open the door of the four-wheeler, but discreetly left to the young man the privilege of handing his young lady out of the musty strap-scented interior.

"Darling, I was beginning to be afraid you weren't coming," John sighed when they were seated on either side of a small table in the gallery upstairs.

"Oh, John, so did I! What do you think? At the last moment Aunt Catherine sent word up to my room that

she had decided it would be better after all if Cummitt drove with me up to Hampstead."

"Great Scott, how did you dodge her?"

"Why, I told Cummitt to ask Aunt Catherine for her fare back, because there's nothing Aunt Catherine hates like being asked for money. Cummitt didn't want to. She's frightened to death of Aunt Catherine. But at last she went, and she came back presently to say her ladyship had changed her mind and thought that as it wouldn't be dark by the time I got to Hampstead I might go alone. And then the cabman was deaf, and I simply couldn't make him stop at first. That's why I was a quarter of an hour late. And he was most frightfully disagreeable when at last I made him understand that I didn't want to go to Hampstead but Romano's. He said it was messing him about to fetch him off the rank for a fare to Hampstead and then go somewhere else. He was so disagreeable that I gave him half a sovereign."

"Gave him half a sovereign?" John gasped. "But I gave the old brute five bob as well."

"John, you didn't!"

"Oh well," he laughed, "what does it matter? I would have given him all I had in the world to bring you to me. But look here, you must let me pay you back that ten bob."

"I won't."

"Darling, please."

"No, John."

"But you must."

"I won't. If I'm such a coward that I have to bribe an old fossil to turn round his ramshackle conveyance in Baker Street, that's my funeral. Don't let's argue any more at our first dinner together."

"As a matter of fact it will be just as well to be a little late," said John. "We're less likely to see anybody we know, and we'll go before the end of the opera. You've never been in one of those boxes on the top tier?"

"I've never been to Covent Garden at all. I've never been to an opera at all."

"I've only been to one. *Traviata*. But they say that *Tristan and Isolde* is the most wonderful love music ever written. That's why I thought we'd go to that together," he murmured. And across the crimson shade of the lamp their eyes met in a glow.

The sun had gone down when they came out of Romano's, and the wind blowing down the Strand struck coldly on them.

"Hansom, sir?"

John smiled at the commissionaire as he nodded, and while he was holding the basket shield over the wheel he slipped a ten-shilling piece into his disengaged hand. Such a tip balanced matters over the frowsy old cabby who had driven Rose from Portman Square.

"Good night, sir. Tell him Covent Garden Opera House? Right, sir." Then he saw that what he had supposed to be a sixpence was gold. "Excuse me, sir, you've . . ."

"No, I haven't," said John quickly. He closed the apron, and as the cabby whipped up his horse he saw through the window the big commissionaire on the kerb gazing after them with a broad expression of benevolence.

Who that has closed the apron of a hansom round himself and the girl he loves and caught her hand within his own an instant later will not understand Dr Johnson's wish to spend his life driving in a post-chaise with a pretty

woman beside him? And who with that experience of a hansom will not envy Johnson the closer intimacy of a post-chaise? And who in a few more years will know except from the assurance of the printed page what it was like to drive with a beloved woman or girl even in such a comparatively modern vehicle as a hansom?

The foyer of the Opera House breathed the air of mystery it still breathes on late arrivals. The attendants had gathered to whisper among themselves in groups. A door was very quietly opened somewhere to let the sound of distant music escape for a moment before it was closed again to intensify the silence of the thickly carpeted stairs up which could be seen the backs of a few late comers, as it were apologetically ascending. It was a hushed world of curtains and mirrors and powdered flunkeys, no mere foyer of a fashionable theatre, but the threshold of the Sleeping Beauty's palace. John and Rose walking up stair after stair, and then following the attendant along a corridor for a mile it seemed past closed doors, felt that they were gaining the most remote spot on earth, and when at last they reached their box and the door was closed upon them the peak of Everest could not have provided them with a sharper awareness of their severance from the world.

It was not a great performance of *Tristan and Isolde*. The divine Ternina would not be singing *Isolde* until June, and poor Van Dyck as Tristan was too obviously depressed by the plainness and woodenness of the German soprano whose name may rest unrecorded among the mercifully forgotten. And since it was not a great performance John and Rose may be forgiven for staying far back in the box and letting their own passion float upon

the music in a wordless perfection of abandonment while the hours passed, may be forgiven for slipping from the box in the middle of the *liebestod* that they might leave the Opera House before the curtain fell and so escape curious eyes in the slow exodus of the audience.

"My dress is frightfully crushed," said Rose, catching sight of the pleats and tucks of her new white organdie frock in a mirror as they passed along the corridor by the help of which she straightened the Empire half wreath of pink rosebuds and ivy in her glinting light brown hair.

"You'll be able to tidy yourself when we get to Kensington," he reassured her. "But don't be a very long time, because it's twelve o'clock already and the night is tearing past."

They did not talk much in the hansom driving westward, for the exhausting ache of aroused desire was heavy on both of them. Her head was on his shoulder, her hand in his. The sharpness of the May air gradually revived them, and by the time the hansom was passing Kensington Gore they had begun to think that perhaps after all it would be better to have supper before they started dancing.

"And please don't be ages tidying yourself," John begged of Rose again when she left him in the lobby of the Imperial Rooms to seek the cloakroom.

The ten minutes she was away were dealt with by John philosophically. He reminded himself that the sooner she came back the more swiftly would travel by the hours that were left of this poignantly brief night.

Rose rejoined him very soon.

"You look marvellously cool and collected," he assured her.

"I'm looking as white as my frock. And so are you," she added.

"It's because we're both hungry. We had dinner so early, and we were both too excited to eat properly."

A smile trembled for an instant upon her lips, and as it vanished a faint blush tinged her cheeks lest John should divine the thought at which she had smiled.

"Yes," she said quickly, "it's because we are hungry."

"If only we were married," John sighed in her ear as they moved along toward the supper room.

She turned her head and looked him full in the eyes.

"Oh, John, I wish we were! I do wish we were. I never thought love would be like this."

"You don't . . . you wouldn't be happier if we . . . if we hadn't let ourselves forget everything except being together in that box at Covent Garden?"

"No, I don't regret anything, but I wish we were going to be married in June. I'm afraid it's going to be a strain. I'm beginning to understand now why older people make such a fuss about things."

John was silent. He too could understand why older people made a fuss about certain things, but it would have struck too hard at the foundations of his mental security to allow the slightest reason to any of the actions or opinions of older people. In the first year of the twentieth century age was still as solid-seeming and impregnable as the Bastille before Camille Desmoulins launched the Paris mob against it to find how weak it actually was. In the first year of the twentieth century the abyss between age and youth seemed for ever incapable of being bridged. Age was not merely the enemy of youth, but an enemy so well armed that it must always win. Nevertheless, the

joy of youthful love was sharpened by the difficulties. Those who were one day to sigh for the delights of the years before the war and clothe them with an imaginary richness of emotional adventure would forget that nothing is so destructive of romance as liberty, and that it was the lack of liberty which had provided the romance.

"Thank heaven there's nobody here to count the dances you're having with me," exclaimed John as with Rose in his arms he swept into the whirl of waltzers. . . . And this is almost my favourite waltz. . . . *Lustige Brüder* . . . nous sommes les Cziganes de Waldteufel, nous buvons dans les cafés . . ." he sang softly in Rose's ear. Who was it that had sung those words to this tune? Why, it was Odette at Geneva last year. "I heard a French girl singing that once." Did he hope that Rose would be inquisitive enough about that French girl to give him an opportunity of tormenting himself and her with the narration of that episode? Was he fool enough to desire to add a deliberately contrived emotion to the already overcharged emotional atmosphere of this May night? But she asked him nothing, and grateful to her sweet confidence in him he held her closer . . . swirling onward to the unbroken rhythm of the dance . . . oh, god, to hold her waist like this! No wonder the Greeks invented the fancy that maidens loth could be transformed to trees. Only the slim trunk of a sapling quivered with life like a girl's waist. "I wish one didn't have to wear gloves when dancing."

"My dress is crumpled enough, John," she murmured.

And in the memory of those hours in the dim background of the box on the topmost tier up to which the music had come surging, her cheeks crimsoned, and as if

fearful that others in this whirling gilded ballroom would read in her face that memory she let her head droop upon John's shoulder.

"Rose, your hair burns me like fire."

They waltzed round in silence for a while.

"Look at that bounder reversing," he exclaimed presently.

Rose looked up with contempt in her glance for this breach of ballroom decorum comparable at this date to such outrageous conduct in the hunting-field as riding over hounds. And let the modern readers who laugh at this absurd old-fashioned prejudice remember that it was the ultimate triumph of reversing which killed the waltz.

"John," she gasped, her hand clutching his shoulder.
"It's my brother Dick!"

"Reversing?" John gasped incredulously.

"No, no, but over there dancing with that girl in the chiffon dress. He saw me."

"Well, I expect he'll think you're with a party."

"Yes, but if he asks me whom I'm with? I can't say I'm with you, John. There would be a most frightful row. Everything would come out. Mother might write to Aunt Catherine. What fearfully bad luck that Dick should be here to-night! I thought he was down at Aldershot."

"Well, we may not run into him. If we do you'll have to say that we're with Mrs Stern as Lady Roker thinks."

"John, I'm sure we ought to slip away."

"But it's not two o'clock yet. We've at least another couple of hours. Besides, we may not meet him."

Rose let herself be persuaded; but the night was spoilt for her. The thought that from somewhere in the room

her eldest brother might be regarding her and wondering who was the young man with whom she was dancing every dance made her so nervous and self-conscious as hardly to be aware whether she was dancing waltz or barn dance or polka.

"Don't hold me so tightly, John. Don't hold me quite so close, John. John, please please don't look down at me like that. Suppose Dick should see us?"

Thus she chided him through dance after dance until he exclaimed irritably that he wished they could run into her brother and get it over.

"After all, even if I haven't happened to meet him at the Hall, he'll soon realize that I know your people quite well, and if we say we're with Mrs Stern we must trust to luck to get away at the end of the dance without running into him again."

"But older brothers are always so difficult, John. And since Dick has been in the Hussars he seems to think of nothing but what is the correct thing to do. Oh, why *did* he come here to-night?"

"It's a good job he didn't go to Covent Garden and see us in that box."

"Oh, he wouldn't have gone there. He simply loathes music. I wonder who that girl was he was dancing with. She's sure to ask me if I'm going to be presented next month. You see, I'm not really properly out, John. It's all too frightful. John, I'm sorry to be so feeble, but I think you must take me home. I think perhaps I'm too tired to grapple with the situation. And it *is* nearly three o'clock."

"But I'd counted on our driving home together in the dawn," John protested in dejection.

"No, John darling, we must go now. I'll meet you in the entrance lobby. Oh, I do hope Dick won't take it into his head to be there just when we go out."

But fate ruled that this was exactly where Dick Medlicott did take it into his head to be.

"Hullo, Rosie, I caught sight of you once or twice in that squash."

"I saw you once, Dick. Dick, this is John Ogilvie. You haven't met him. He's staying near us at Milbourne."

Dick Medlicott gave a nod of maddening condescension, and curled his little light brown moustache.

"I didn't know you were going to dances in London yet, Rosie," he said.

"I've only been to this one. Mrs Stern had some tickets, and as it was a charity I didn't think mother would mind my going."

"Who's Mrs Stern?"

"It was her party."

Dick Medlicott looked round to be introduced.

"Well, as a matter of fact she's just gone, Dick."

He raised his eyebrows, and Rose plunged desperately.

"One of the girls was faint, and John offered to drive me back to Aunt Catherine's, so that Mrs Stern could drive with this girl straight back to Hampstead in her carriage without going round by Portman Square."

Dick Medlicott twirled his little moustache.

"I suppose I ought to relieve—er—Mr Ogilvie."

"Damn him," thought John. And aloud he said coldly, "The hansom's waiting, Medlicott, Rose is tired."

Dick Medlicott blinked.

"Well, perhaps you'd better drive her back as it seems

to have been arranged so cleverly. I can't very well tell the party I'm with that my young sister requires her brother's escort. But look here, Rosie, I don't think this kind of behaviour is good enough."

"There's going to be a frightful row about this, John," said Rose miserably when they left the Imperial Rooms behind them, looming chill now as a great iceberg against the paling sky.

It was close upon four o'clock when the hansom reached Portman Square. A sharp east wind was whipping the tender foliage of the trees in a colourless dawn.

"Perhaps it will be all right," said John as he stood on the pavement waiting for Rose to unlock the front door.

She shook her head, kissed the tip of her finger as a kiss of farewell for him, and was lost behind the solid Early Victorian portal. One could have fancied that the slim figure in the organdie balldress passed through like a ghost.

John's apprehension about the future was not allayed by a letter from Rose two days later.

205 PORTMAN SQUARE,

W.

Friday

My darling John,

A telegram has just come from mother to say she wants me home at once. I'm afraid Dick must have told her about you and me. I feel rather hopeless about everything. I hope you'll pass at Chelsea all right. You mustn't think I don't love you because I'm feeling a bit depressed about the future. It's so awful being only eighteen. You mustn't write to me, but when you are

back at Milbourne next week you'd better come to tea as if nothing had happened and then we shall know the worst.

*Your loving
Rose*

It was not a letter which augured much power of resistance in Rose to the aggression of family life. John's heart sank when he read it. He could not bear to confide in Mrs Stern. He dreaded a sympathy which would imply a criticism of Rose. From the start Mrs Stern had tried to warn him of the difficulties ahead. And when she heard of Dick Medlicott's interference she would be bound to suggest the unlikelihood of his ever being accepted by Rose's family as the right kind of person for her to marry. However sympathetic Mrs Stern might try to be he should not be able to help being suspicious of her sincerity. In her heart she would rejoice because in her heart she believed that this love of his was a folly of youth. And it would be nearly as futile to confide in Elise. She would be sympathetic enough, but it would be the kind of sympathy one gets for losing a valuable tiepin or failing in an examination. In fact it was impossible to confide in anybody about love. Where was it he had read that love was an egotism of two people? It was some Frenchman. L'amour est un égoïsme à deux. Even if two people had exactly the same pain they would not be able to share it. Each of them would always be thinking his pain was the more severe. Love, and only love, could split one's ego in half and mend it with another's ego. In the first elation of his love for Rose he had talked about it as if it was an unique experience in the history of humanity, demanding

for it a respectful attention from two women who no doubt had smiled at his self-importance. Besides, it might be unjust to take it for granted that Rose was going to surrender so easily. He had probably been rattled by her brother's cold assurance of manner. That was what Dick Medlicott would have aimed at doing. He could not use his sabre, so he would cut his opponent down by a cavalry insolence of manner. Yet with the senior subalterns in his own squadron he would be as humble as a fag. What did he care what his sister did unless her behaviour exposed him to the mockery of his fellows? If he had really supposed there was any harm in her going to that dance he would not have been in such a hurry to get back to his own party, leaving her to find her way home without his big brother's chaperonage. And he had had the cheek to say he did not think her kind of behaviour was good enough.

Ten days later John satisfied the examiners that he was capable of handling a company with sufficient skill to be granted the letters *p.s.* in small italics after his name in the Army List as a token that he had passed schools. The terrors of the square at Chelsea were behind him.

The Vicar of Milbourne was particularly gratified by John's success, so unusual was it for him to be able to congratulate any of his pupils on having passed an examination.

"It's really very satisfactory, Ogilvie. Very satisfactory indeed. And I think things are going very well in South

Africa too. A great pity the Queen could not have lived long enough to have that consolation at the end. Yes, they are going well. Sir Alfred Milner would not have come back otherwise."

"Yes, we are all really very proud," added Mrs Damson. "And our sale of work was such a success last week. We made thirty-two pounds four and sevenpence halfpenny clear when all expenses had been paid, and it was a most enjoyable afternoon. The Vicar's little speech was a great success, but we missed Rose Medlicott. I had counted on her help with the flower stall. I always think her one of our prettiest girls."

"Wasn't she there?" asked John in a desiccated voice.

"No, she's gone to Switzerland with Mrs Beadon—that's Mrs Medlicott's eldest sister. Colonel Beadon is with his regiment in South Africa . . . yes, to Switzerland. I believe they expect to spend most of the summer there. So nice for dear Rose, and of course very nice for poor Mrs Beadon who lost her only boy at Spion Kop."

"Ah yes, those black days at the beginning of the war," said the Vicar a little unctuously. "Still, everything is going splendidly now, and with this splendid Unionist majority the country can count on safely garnering, yes, garnering all the fruits of victory. So our splendid young men will not have laid down their lives in vain. I see that W. L. Courtney has just coined a splendid word for the disease which attacks our radical sentimentalists. 'Boeritis' he calls it. Witty, very witty."

John decided to ride over at once to Medlicott Hall and find out if this sudden departure of Rose was the result of that fatal evening hardly yet a fortnight ago. Damn her brother Dick! Damn all stuffy conventions!

Damn everything and everybody! Was one living in the twentieth century or the Middle Ages? It was a pity Dick Medlicott had not been sent out to South Africa and been . . . well, no, not killed of course. No doubt Mrs Medlicott would suppose that he would funk going to the Hall. No doubt she thought he would be glad to slip out of the whole business like a dog with its tail between its legs. And he did not intend to make excuses, either. He would tell her mother that he loved Rose and ask for their engagement to be recognized. Mrs Medlicott might be able to frighten Rose, but she should not frighten him. And if Mrs Medlicott refused to listen to common sense he would tackle the Squire.

John rode furiously on his Rover between hedgerows of withering hawthorn, with hatred for this fresh green landscape from which Rose had been untimely snatched. It was among these bluebell-drenched woods that he and she had planned to walk, and now the perfume of them blown on the breeze smelt sickeningly of emptiness. The drive through the park to the house was strewn with fallen chestnut-blossom which muted the faint crackle of his tyres and intensified the forbidding silence in which the great house brooded before him. Here on a happier day he might have seen Rose with Rudy and Speed coming to meet him across that meadow which was now garish in the sunlight with a myriad useless buttercups.

The footman believed that Mrs Medlicott was at home, and led the way to that long low room whose oriels looked out upon the stretch of lawn where by the moonlight of not yet three months ago he had first met Rose picking daffodils. The tick-tick of a Dresden clock on the mantelpiece, the peck-peck of a canary in a cage were all that

broke the silence when the footman went out in search of Mrs Medlicott. He had waited in this room once or twice for Rose herself, watching for her through the oriels to come in from the garden across that wide lawn, watched her trying not to hurry lest William the footman should be left too far behind in her eagerness and afterwards criticize that eagerness in the servants' hall. No Rose could possibly come over that lawn this afternoon. She was away beyond the Eiger and the Wetterhorn, sitting now perhaps at tea in that very hotel in Grindelwald where he had been sitting a year ago. She was away beyond the Channel, beyond France, beyond the Bernese Oberland—in Lucerne, it might be, walking by the sunny lakeside, on the Rigi perhaps, hearing cowbells tinkling in the mist, on the Stanserhorn, gazing down from that platform into the dark bottle-green water two thousand feet and more below, at Interlaken, sipping coffee in the dappled sunlight, or even in Geneva itself, gazing at the mountains beyond the silver lake and perhaps agreeing with that detestable aunt of hers how pleasant it would be to have tea outside under those clipped acacias exactly where a year ago he had drunk those three maraschinos.

Ah, here was William coming back, and behind him with the last of the tulips in her basket Mrs Medlicott herself. She looked more unapproachable than usual in that floppy wide-brimmed straw hat.

"I'm so glad you've paid me this visit, Mr Ogilvie. I was wanting to see you."

Her kingfisher-blue eyes were fixed on him, and before the hardness of them John's bold intentions began to waver.

"I think I had better tell you at once that I was not at

all pleased to hear about Rose's recent escapade with you in London. I know you are both very young, but you are both old enough to be able to realize what might be the repercussions of such a foolish business."

"It was entirely my fault, Mrs Medlicott," said John.

"Oh no, not entirely. Rose is as much to blame as you. She knew that she was not properly out and that even if Mrs Stern had asked her to go to a charity dance at the Imperial Rooms she should have explained to her that my permission was necessary."

"But Lady Roker knew," John pointed out.

"Did Lady Roker know that you and Rose went to Covent Garden first?"

So Rose had given that away. Oh well, perhaps it was better. It would all be difficult enough without the embarrassment of lies.

"That was entirely my fault," he declared.

"No, not entirely, though I think it was unpardonable of you to give Rose an opportunity of making such a complete fool of herself. However, I do not propose to dwell on your folly. I've no doubt you realize it yourself by now. Nobody knows about the Covent Garden part of the business except myself, and I don't propose to make it public. Help yourself to bread and butter, will you? I'm sure I can count on your saying nothing about Covent Garden."

"Of course not, Mrs Medlicott."

"I expect you have already heard from Mrs Damson that Rose has gone to Switzerland with my sister. She will be away at least a couple of months, and I have asked her to give me her promise that she will not write to you.

I should like you to give me the same promise with regard to her."

"I don't know her address. But surely I may write her one letter?"

"Not one, Mr Ogilvie."

"But we love each other!"

Mrs Medlicott's kingfisher-blue eyes rose above the silver kettle to transfix John.

"I had not found it difficult to guess that you were beginning to find one another's company congenial. But . . . how old are you?"

"I shall be nineteen next October."

"Yes, well, in spite of that you are at present eighteen, which is an even more ridiculous age than nineteen to talk about being in love with a girl of your own age."

"I don't see how age matters if one is really in love."

"Unfortunately the world pays a great deal of attention to such a trifle."

"But I want to marry Rose."

"Indeed, and when?"

"I suppose when we are both twenty-one."

"Two and a half years hence. Do you really think that you have a right to ask a girl like Rose to be engaged to you for the two and a half uncertain years of . . . upon my word, I had almost said childhood?"

"But if Rose is willing?"

"Rose may be willing, but her mother has to think about Rose's future. I'm afraid I shall sound sadly cynical, Mr Ogilvie, when I ask you on what you propose to live when you are twenty-one?"

"I shall have between three and four hundred a year of my own, and I expect my father would add something."

"Even if your father doubled your income it would not be a great deal. However, if you and Rose are still as much in love with one another two and a half years hence and are still determined to marry, it is obvious that you will do so. Meanwhile, however, I'm afraid I shall have to make it a condition that you neither see one another nor communicate with one another until that time. I should be a very foolish mother, Mr Ogilvie, if I allowed my daughter's future to be handicapped by a boy and girl love affair of which you are surely honest enough and intelligent enough to admit that the only test possible is time."

"But if we do not see one another or write for a year, couldn't we be engaged at the end of that?"

Mrs Medlicott shook her head.

"Two and a half years is the shortest time I will allow. You see, I must be frank with you, and say that I should call it a . . . rather disappointing match for Rose. And so . . . I'm being quite brutally frank . . . I want to do everything I possibly can to stop it. If the unexpected happens two and a half years hence . . . well, I suppose I shall have to make the best of it."

"And Rose has agreed to this?" John asked dully.

"Rose could hardly do anything else."

"But didn't she tell you that we loved each other?"

"Yes; I will give you that amount of gratification. At the same time she realizes how horribly indiscreet she had been, and she was perhaps not sorry when I found a way out for her by this Swiss plan."

John longed for the courage to shake off the fetters of decency and tell Mrs Medlicott that she had no right to tear asunder two human beings who had already discovered

by their bodily senses that they were meant for one another.

I have kissed your daughter into a woman. Forbid us to write. Forbid us to see each other. Chatter your rubbish about youth and prospects and incomes of eight hundred a year being insufficient. But you cannot take away from me the memory of her breasts. You cannot take away from her the memory of my hand. I wish now that I had exercised no check upon myself, but made her mine completely. You think that Rose is still unaware of what marriage means. You think that you have only to indicate an eligible suitor and that she will take your advice. But I have taught her more in a few weeks of what life means than you have taught her since she was born. And you have no right to assume that we are a couple of children who do not know our own minds and tear us apart like this. You are horrified to think that we went to Tristan and Isolde together, but what would you be if you knew that for hour after hour while that phrenzied music of passion was surging up to that dim box she and I were except for her ultimate virginity phrenzied lovers ourselves, not stage lovers but pale and shaken by passion. Indeed if it had not been for my gentlemanly cowardice, in what matters most we could consider ourselves married already. Your cold-eyed son was horrified to find his sister waltzing with somebody who was not in the cavalry, but what would he have felt if he could have seen us in that dim red box at the opera? He couldn't have twirled that away with his little moustache.

Alas for such brave thoughts, what John actually said was:

“Very well, Mrs Medlicott, you can stop Rose and myself from seeing one another or writing to one another, but I hope you can’t stop us loving one another.”

"I'm not counting entirely on myself for that, Mr Ogilvie. Do help yourself to cake. No? You've made a very poor tea, I'm afraid."

"I think you should let us write one letter," said John reproachfully.

Mrs Medlicott shook her head, and for the first time that afternoon there was a faint sparkle of warmth in her cold kingfisher-blue eyes.

"One day you will look back to this talk of ours, and you will say to yourself how kind I was, considering how much reason I had to feel most excessively annoyed."

John was thankful he had refrained from discussing his anxiety with Mrs Stern or his stepmother. He would at least be spared the humiliation of trying to explain away Rose's surrender. He took care, however, not to go up to London, and spent most of his time working at sonnets in a dusty arbour of jasmine which had been built and planted by some earlier vicar of Milbourne in a far corner of the garden. John was under no illusions about his verse. He recognized it to be a literary exercise of the same kind as those sets of verses in Latin and Greek which had played such a conspicuous part in his education. The first years of the twentieth century were not favourable to poetry. Young men were depressed by the overwhelming achievement of the past, and although mentally disturbed by the feeling of change in the air they were still unable to perceive any new road along which poetry could progress. The reaction against the art of the previous decade had already begun, but it was a negative reaction which inspired no substitute. Events in South Africa had finally discredited Rudyard Kipling with the younger generation.

The cynical exploitation of the war by the Unionist party which was ultimately to receive the sharpest political chastisement ever administered by the British electorate was still five years away from being punished. The country seemed a rubbish heap of the Victorian era which would never be cleared up, and poetry does not find rubbish heaps fertile soil. The mental state of the young man at the beginning of the twentieth century might be divined from his belief that the future lines of English prose had been laid down by George Meredith. John wallowed in his mental superiority to an old-fashioned reader like the Vicar of Milbourne when the latter expressed himself unable to appreciate the richly involved rococo of *Lord Ormont and his Aminta*.

John in that jasmine arbour grew more and more firmly convinced of his inability to say anything in verse about star-crossed love which had not already been said much better before. The final proof came when he discovered to what an extent even Tennyson had anticipated him. His mother's early reading of the *Idylls of the King* and *The Lady of Shalott* had prevented his being too openly scornful of Tennyson at literary discussions; but the reaction against him was too severe for any young man to be unaffected by it. Now one day he turned over the pages of *Maud* in a slim faded green volume he had taken down from the top shelf of the Vicar's bookcase:

Peace, angry spirit, and let him be!
Has not his sister smiled on me?

John tore up what he had written about Dick Medlicott. Tennyson had said all that was necessary about interfering brothers. It was no use writing about Rose

unless he could set her above Maud. It would be better to fail with hundreds of others over Helen or Cleopatra.

So the summer days passed in squeezing emotion to fit rhymes instead of discovering rhymes to express emotion. Rose would not remain always in Switzerland. When she returned fate would decide the future. It was lucky that he had been caught by that sudden whim to join the Volunteers. He would take care not to put in any of his drills with the Oxford bugshooters; it should be imperative for him to spend a good deal of every vacation in Loamshire in order to fulfil his military duties.

One day at lunch the Vicar read out from his paper that Lady Roker had left almost the whole of her fortune to the British Israelites.

"Is Lady Roker dead?" John exclaimed.

"Yes, she died suddenly at the beginning of the month. I'm afraid this disposition of her money will be something of a disappointment to the Medlicotts."

"Indeed, yes," Mrs Damson agreed. "It was generally expected that all she left would go to them, and I'm sure it is badly needed. What did you say she had left it to, George?"

"A society devoted to spreading the belief that the Anglo-Saxon peoples are the ten lost tribes of Israel dispersed in the eighth century before Christ."

"I would accept that without question," John declared. "I shouldn't think that such a belief required much subsidizing."

He could not help feeling pleased at the disappointment which old Lady Roker had inflicted. If Rose had inherited any considerable amount of money from her Mrs Medlicott would have considered him less eligible than ever.

At the end of July John left for the annual camp at Aldershot with his battalion which with the 2nd V.B. Loamshires, the 1st V.B. Huntingdons, and the 1st V.B. Duke of Cambridge's Light Infantry made up the South-East Midland Brigade.

It was a strenuous week both of work and play. Parades, inspections, camp routine, marches, and sham fights from six o'clock in the morning until dinner, and after dinner a long night of amusement which a few of the subalterns would usually keep up until dawn.

The week's training was to wind up with a tremendous mimic battle in which thirty thousand of His Majesty's auxiliary forces would be engaged. It happened that the previous evening was the guest night in the Mess, and there was a representative gathering not merely of volunteers but of regulars too, including a couple of Horse Gunners whose richly gold-laced mess-jackets seemed to belong to the time of Wellington. John was watching the guests gather in the mess anteroom with Tom Pownall of the Stanstead company when he suddenly caught sight of the yellow-striped overalls of the 17th Hussars. His pulses quickened. Was that . . . ?

"Hullo, there's Dick Medlicott," said Pownall. "He's evidently going to celebrate the happy occasion with Henry Falconer."

"What happy occasion?"

"It's a secret for the moment . . . or at any rate

it's not formally announced yet. I think Henry Falconer wanted to get this camp finished before it was announced, but between you and me he's just got engaged to Rosie Medlicott."

For a moment the brilliant medley of uniforms seemed to turn black. John felt his knees giving under him. He hastily swallowed the gin and bitters he was holding, and at that moment the band outside started a gay tune. The Colonel was leading the way in to dinner. John joined the multi-coloured stream and moved in a daze to take his seat at the foot of the long table. Hugo Pledge, the Captain of the Dolby company, was Mess President, and for to-night's entertainment he had presented the Mess with five dozen bottles of the finest vintage port from the cellars of his firm. The officers of the First Volunteer Battalion of the Loamshire Regiment had no false modesty about their powers of entertainment. They intended that their guest night should be voted the best of the week, and it undoubtedly was, for all except somebody like John who for a *hors d'œuvre* had had his whole future wrecked by a mortal blow. He managed somehow to take part in the conversation at his end of the table, and fortunately that end was not the one where Henry Falconer and Dick Medlicott were sitting. And he must have drunk a good deal, for when Hugo Pledge rose with his glass and called 'Mr Vice, the King!' John felt he was swaying slightly as he responded with raised glass, 'Gentlemen, the King!'

After dinner there were the recognized diversions of cock-fighting between the subalterns and those blindfold duels in which the adversaries were armed with rolled up weekly illustrated papers—formidable enough weapons.

This gladiatorial entertainment was followed by a musical performance when some of the captains sang sentimental ballads which had been sung in drawing-rooms for the last twenty years, and some of the subalterns obliged with popular numbers from the latest musical comedies. Then the Colonel sat down to his whist, some of the others to bridge, and the rest to vingt-et-un and banker. The old adage betrayed John. He was as unlucky at cards that evening as he had been in love, and after losing five pounds he retired to a corner of the mess marquee with Tom Pownall, Rickaby, and some of the younger guests to drink whisky and soda. He had made up his mind to avoid meeting Dick Medlicott, but presently Henry Falconer came across with him to the group in which John was sitting.

"May we join you people? This is Medlicott of the 17th Hussars . . . Pownall of Ours, Rickaby of Ours, Ogilvie of Ours . . . ah, but of course you've met Ogilvie, Dick. . . ."

"No, I don't think so," the cavalry subaltern bit in.

John was still sober enough to appreciate the breach of etiquette that would be involved in calling a guest of Ours a damned liar; but he could not bring himself to greet him, and in rising from his deck-chair he managed to knock over the table of drinks, which necessitated ordering a fresh round and gave him an excuse to preoccupy himself.

"Why don't you drink to Falconer's future happiness?" he muttered to Tom Pownall.

"Shut up, you silly ass," Falconer's red-haired subaltern whispered. "I told you it hadn't been publicly announced yet."

"Well, that's her brother," John persisted.

"I know that."

"Then drink *his* bloody health."

"Shut up, you're tight."

"We're all tight," John declared obstinately. "And I don't like his face. What the hell does he want to join us for? We were perfectly all right without him."

"Look here, if you're going to get quarrelsome," Pownall whispered, "you'd better go to bed. We've got the deuce of a day before us."

"It's all right, Pownall, I'm not going to empty my glass in his face, even although I may not like such a face. You can rely on me, Pownall, not to do anything that could be sconstrued as a gesture of offensive insolence towards a guest. I'm simply giving you my private opinion of his face in the strictest confidence."

"Well, do shut up, man. Falconer's looking at you."

Luckily for John's powers of self-control Dick Medlicott just then said that he would have to get back to barracks.

"I'm doing galloper for the chief umpire to-morrow. It's going to be quite a show, Henry."

"So we poor foot-sloggers have been led to suppose. We've got to be moving by half-past five. I think we'd all better be toddling bedwards. You're not going to keep it up till dawn, Tom?" he said to his subaltern.

The Colonel had risen from his whist, and there was a general move to break up the evening.

John would have liked to remain in the mess; but Fleming, the senior subaltern, came along to tell him the Colonel had expressed a desire, which amounted to an order, that all officers should go off to their tents early in view of the day before them, and most unwillingly

he left the marquee. His head swirled for a while in the freshness of the night air; but the emotion caused by the news of Rose's engagement was too strong for the fumes of the wine, and by the time he was undressed he was miserably sober. Before getting into bed he unlocked the tin helmet case in which he kept the two or three letters and notes he had had from Rose, and without reading them (not that he did not know them by heart) he burnt them one by one and trod the ashes into the sandy gravel outside his tent.

A tall figure in a cape coming down the lines in the starlight stopped to see who the figure in pyjamas was.

"Hullo, Ogilvie, are you feeling bad?"

"No, no, I'm quite all right, Falconer," said John curtly.

"I have something I wanted to tell you. Mind if I come in your tent for a moment? You hop into bed. It's pretty cool now, though I expect we shall have another blazing day to-morrow."

John looked quickly round the tent to see if there were any unburnt scraps of Rose's letters; but he had done his work thoroughly: there was nothing left of them. He got into bed. Falconer sat down on the camp-chair.

"I got back from Switzerland just before we went into camp, and I want to tell you that Rosie Medlicott has promised to marry me. I told Tom Pownall to-day, and I meant to tell you; but I didn't get a chance to see you before dinner. The engagement will be announced when I get back to Stanstead next week. Rosie is coming home on Thursday. I know you and she were great pals. So you're entitled to hear the news before it's everybody's news."

"I hope you'll . . . I congratulate you . . ."

"Of course I've known her ever since she was a kid."

"Yes, she told me once about going up for May Week at Cambridge with her governess to stay with you."

"I think I fell in love with her then. We're to be married in the autumn. Well, I just wanted to give you the news myself, and I'll trot along to bed now."

"And will it be in order for me to write and congratulate Rose?"

"I hope you will indeed. I'm sure she'll welcome a letter from you particularly. It was rather strange that I should propose to her in Switzerland. I'd gone out with my old father who was consulting a Swiss specialist about his eyes, and I ran into her and Mrs Beadon in Zürich. And then I suddenly realized that Rosie was grown up at last, and as I think I must have wanted to marry her ever since she was ten years old I knew I must hurry up if I didn't want somebody else to carry her off first."

"I expect Mrs Medlicott was very pleased, wasn't she?"

"Delighted. So was the Squire. I'm a very lucky man."

"Well, thanks very much for telling me, Falconer. And again my best congratulations."

"Now did Falconer know anything about myself and Rose?" John asked of his pillow when he had blown out the candle in the lantern and was lying back horribly wide awake in the darkness. Was it because he had known more than he pretended that in so friendly a fashion he had given him his news? Or had he noticed the coolness between himself and Dick Medlicott, and

heard something from his future brother-in-law which had made him come to the tent like that and tell him? Or had he with a lover's intuition divined suddenly that he and Rose had been much more than good pals? Well, anyway, he was a good chap, and it was plain that he loved Rose. But surely, surely she could not love him? Or had she loved Falconer all the time and merely fancied herself in love with himself? Falconer had said that when he met her in Zürich he had suddenly realized she was grown up. Was that what he himself had done, wakened her with his kisses only to teach her that she loved somebody else? Or had it been the same kind of weakness which had led her to surrender so easily to her mother's will? Had she known what pleasure it would give Mrs Medlicott to have the future Lady Warburton in the family, and had that age-long inherited instinct to make a good match been too strong for her? Mrs Stern would have good reason to smile when she heard the news. She had never been able to hide her conviction that it was all a mistake. She had been beautifully tactful, but she could never avoid suggesting that the world in which Rose moved was not his world and that for him to enter it was to turn aside into a dead end. Yes, Mrs Stern would be sympathetic enough, but she would find it difficult to conceal her satisfaction. Oh God, how empty life was feeling!

When reveille sounded John had been asleep hardly an hour, but he was nevertheless thankful for the crowded hot tiring day before him.

"I wouldn't wear nothing except a thin vest under your tunic, sir," his servant advised. "It's a bit parky before the sun gets really going, but it's going to be a

scorcher of a day, a fair August scorcher. I hear there's likely to be a twelve-mile march before we begin to think about any enemy."

To the strains of *The Loamshire Ploughboy*, the regimental march, the battalion moved out in a scarlet column nine hundred strong.

"They say we shall be in touch with the enemy by about eleven o'clock," Captain Meade told his two subalterns.

About noon, after marching for hours along dusty Hampshire lanes, the battalion received orders to deploy upon a tract of heathy country and advance in extended order toward a ridge of woodland which was believed to be held by the enemy in force. In those days of the South African war advancing in extended order was the latest military passion. Close formation was to be considered antediluvian until the Germans showed what could be done with it in the advance through Belgium, after which the training of the British Army ignored extended order in time to make a successful hash of the Suvla landing where familiarity with it would have been serviceable.

It was an exhausting business for the subaltern and non-commissioned officers to keep volunteers advancing across rough country with intervals of five yards between each man, conversation demanding a closer interval for comfort. It was even more exhausting to persuade men to take cover when the worst danger to be incurred from not taking cover were the purple face and purple language of some critic of high rank from the regular forces enraged by the sight of a private's backside sticking out of a clump of heather.

John's half-company was spread out across over two hundred yards, which necessitated his running, with back bent double, up and down the length of it in an effort to prevent his men gradually converging into a more companionable line of fifty yards.

"Your half-company is bunching too much, Mr Ogilvie," Captain Meade snapped, with the irritation induced by a message from the Major that unless A Company preserved its extended order more strictly the whole battalion would be held by the umpires to have been annihilated by the enemy's artillery on the wooded ridge which they were advancing to storm.

"I'm sorry, sir. I'll do my best to keep them extended."

"Then damn it, get a move on, Mr Ogilvie."

John ran along the line until he found Colour-sergeant Capstick.

"My god, Colour-sergeant, is it absolutely impossible to persuade these chaps to keep extended? Captain Meade has just been cursing me. Look at that man over there! What the hell does he think he's doing?"

Second-Lieutenant and Colour-sergeant dashed as inconspicuously as possible in the direction of a scarlet figure a hundred yards further along who was doing a kind of Dervish's dance at the end of the line.

"Private Bawcock," shouted Sergeant Capstick, "get down on your fat belly at once."

But even as he spoke the Colour-sergeant tripped over a tussock and came down on his own belly long before Private Bawcock. The accident made him disinclined to listen to any excuses from the offender.

"What d'ye think you're doing, Private Bawcock?

Scaring crows or advancing in extended order against a position strongly held by the henemy's hartillery?"

"I got into a gauze-bush," said Private Bawcock sulkily. "And then when I was getting out, a bee . . ."

"Stop that obscene language, man! Can't you see Lieutenant Ogilvie? What are you thinking of?"

"I wasn't using no language, Colour-sergeant. It was a bee up and stung me when I was getting out of the gauze-bush."

"That's quite right, Colour-sergeant. He *was* stung," a corporal put in.

"Well, next time any man is stung, Corporal," said John, "it'll be your business to see that he doesn't stand up and dance about in that idiotic fashion. It makes the whole half-company look ridiculous."

The enemy's guns had not spoken throughout this advance, and when at last the attacking force reached the foot of the wooded slope there was a general hope that the order to fix bayonets would be given now and that the position would be carried in a final glorious charge, which would compensate for that weary advance in extended formation. No order came; but the men were given a chance to rest for a while under the trees at the bottom, and presently a rumour declared that the position on top was held not by the enemy's guns but by the second battalion of the Loamshires.

"Gawd," groaned Private Bawcock. "And me crawling half a bleeding mile with a bee-sting in my blooming hand as big as Sergeant Capstick's fat —. Sham fight, eh? It won't be no blooming sham fight when I get back to Loam and talk to the old — straight across the counter of his shop. Did you hear that, Corp.?"

"Hear what?"

"Why, it's our own gorgeous second battalion at the top of this blooming hill. Sitting there in the shade like heroes and watching us poor — crawling through the gauze and heather like a lot of school kids in an obstacle race. Gawd! No wonder old Kruger had the laugh of us."

The order to advance again was now given. John blew his whistle and waved his arm. There was no sign of the Second Loamshires when they reached the crest. There was merely another stretch of gorse and heather, and another wooded slope about a couple of miles farther on.

Somebody said he could hear gunfire away to the right.

"Shut up," jeered Private Bawcock, "that's not guns. That's the Colonel pulling the cork out of his flask. And if I had a pint of bitter in front of me I'd say good luck to him."

John was summoned at this moment by Captain Meade whom he found with Falconer, Pacey-Foote and Pownall puzzling over a map in the shade of a pine-tree.

"You saw no sign of any troops away on your left, did you, Ogilvie?" asked his captain.

"No, sir, not a sign."

"I'm afraid we've got too far to the left," said Falconer. "There's no sign of E and F companies behind us, and we've lost touch with B and C too apparently."

"The last thing I heard was when Major Barker rode up and told me my company was too much bunched," said Meade. "That was when I ordered you to extend the men further, Ogilvie."

John was wishing it had been any other company

commander than Falconer who was involved with them in this muddle. It seemed so fatuous to be arguing here with Falconer about a muddle in a sham fight when Falconer had changed the course of his life by taking Rose away from him. Bewitched by the thought of her, he had allowed himself to be bewitched by the whole scheme of the existence that adorned girls like Rose. In love with her and hoping to marry her he had persuaded himself that England was so well worth defending that even playing at soldiers like this was a solemn duty. He had stifled all criticism of that imbecile assumption of an infallible superiority which was voiced by his brother officers. He had accepted like a law of nature the proposition that the English landed classes represented the highest achievement of human evolution, and the corollary that the lower classes with whom were incorporated not merely all foreigners but even the Irish, the Welsh, and the Scots were created by God to respect and bow down before His chosen people.

"I suppose the best thing we can do is to move forward," Meade suggested.

"I agree with you," Falconer said. "Perhaps we've got too far to the right."

"Or to the left," Meade added.

The two captains bent over to examine the inadequate map once more.

"Some of the men in my half-company thought they could hear gun-fire on the right," said John.

"My fellows thought it was on the left," said Pownall.

"We never heard any firing at all," said Pacey-Foote.

The two captains walked back and swept with their field-glasses the tract of country over which they had

advanced in extended order. It appeared as empty as the Sahara.

"I think that hill ahead must be our objective," Falconer declared.

"But if that's Ashton Ridge, what's the place we're on? There's no sign on this map of any other rising ground beyond Hurst Common, across a part of which we came," Meade objected.

"Perhaps the map is wrong. It's a very cheap-looking affair," said Falconer distastefully.

"I think Major Barker's gone wrong," said Pacey-Foote. "He usually does. I think he's taken the companies in support of us round this ridge we're on. And the reserves with the Colonel must have followed him."

"They were saying in my half-company that the 2nd Loamshires were here," John put in.

"Good god, why didn't you tell us that before?" Meade snapped. "They were in reserve!"

"Lucky it's only a sham fight, Meade," said his brother captain. "Well, what are we going to do?"

"I think we'd better make for the next ridge. We may be able to see better where we are from there."

Orders were given. Whistles were blown. Presently in extended order again the two lost companies were advancing across another desolate tract of furze and heather, the August sun beating down upon them and every man now pursued by a cloud of flies picked up under the trees.

"My missus said I joined the Volunteers by mistake for the Boys' Brigade," observed Private Bawcock, "and darn'ee, the woman was right. And I lay when

we do get there we'll find the beggaring enemy has drunk all the beer."

"Keep low, you men on the left," barked a sergeant.

"Low?" groaned one of the culprits. "My gawd, if I don't get some pudden inside of me before long I'll be floating across the field like a bleedin' daddy-long-legs!"

"Yes, respect for His chosen people," thought John, swishing at the infernal flies with a bunch of bracken he had pulled during the halt. Well, this was the end of such fooling. Fitz had been right to jeer at him. As soon as this camp was over he would resign his commission. Loamshire should know him no more. Why, good god, Henry Falconer and Rose would be married in the autumn, and if he came down to Milbourne to put in some drills during the Christmas vac, he would find them established at Warburton Park as a married couple, with years before them of security in the heart of England. Falconer would command the battalion in due course. A Justice of the Peace. A Chairman of Quarter Sessions. A Deputy-Lieutenant. A patron of half a dozen livings. A Master of Foxhounds. An indispensable figure in every county enterprise. His road lay before him clear and easy. And Rose's road was clear enough also. Bazaar opener in chief to Loamshire. Patroness of all the sales of work within a radius of twenty-five miles. Another indispensable figure in every county enterprise for sixty years to come perhaps, unless she broke her neck in the hunting-field.

No, damn it, I will not sneer. The folly was mine for supposing I could carry her off from this life, or worse that I could fit myself into it and on a few hundred pounds a year give her the life to which she was born. Let the Sleeping

Beauty sleep again. If indeed I love her with imagination, if this love is not mere desire for the loveliest girl I have known, I ought to be able to be glad that she has decided to sleep again. Henry Falconer is a damned attractive fellow, and a damned good fellow. I can't possibly dislike him. I can't really pretend that he is not exactly the husband Rose ought to have. After all, how insignificant in the order of things is my personal passion for her!

"Enemy cavalry in sight, sir," Colour-sergeant Capstick reported.

John put up his glasses and scanned the ridge ahead of him. Half a dozen mounted figures were moving along the skyline.

"I think it's the umpires, Colour-sergeant."

"Is it, sir?" said the Colour-sergeant in the gloomy tones of disappointment. "That's a nasty suck in. The men were hoping to fire off a few rounds at last."

"Oh, well, I don't see why they shouldn't," said John. "They've had a rotten day." He looked over to the right. His own half-company was far enough away to make any message to ask for orders useless if the mounted figures were not to disappear meanwhile. He blew his whistle and signalled the men to halt and lie down.

"Enemy at nine hundred yards!" he shouted. "Ready! Present! Fire!"

The sergeants went running along the line repeating the order, and for two or three minutes the left half-company of A Company of the 1st V.B. Loamshires enjoyed themselves blazing away at the enemy's cavalry. Then one of the mounted figures came galloping down the slope toward the fusillade, and presently an indignant

hussar subaltern was demanding the whereabouts of the officer in charge of this detachment.

John stepped forward.

"What the hell do you think you're doing, sir?" Dick Medlicott shouted.

John was so delighted to hear how undignified her brother sounded when he abandoned his carefully cultivated drawl that he could not help grinning.

"It's nothing to laugh at. Do you realize your men have been firing at the umpires?"

"I was told we should probably find the ridge occupied by the enemy," said John coldly. "I supposed them to be the enemy's vedettes."

"Haven't you any glasses?"

"No, that's what we're all looking for," came the sepulchral voice of Private Bawcock a few yards up.

"Silence there!" called John sharply.

"Don't you know an umpire's armlet yet?" Dick Medlicott went on in tones of exasperated contempt.

"I'm sorry we've wiped out the umpires," said John. "But if they *had* been enemy cavalry and I *had* advanced my men without firing, the umpires might have wiped *us* out."

"Where's the captain of your company?"

"About a quarter of a mile away to the right."

"Well, you'd better go back and report to him that the umpires are extremely annoyed at having been fired at by his men. You'll also tell him that the cease fire has sounded and that the pow-wow will be held in Six Tree Bottom about a mile beyond that ridge in front of you."

John saluted, and Dick Medlicott rode off to join the massacred umpires.

"I'm sorry, sir, it caused a little bit of unpleasantness," said Colour-sergeant Capstick. "But it cheered up the men a lot. They got rid of over twenty rounds. If Captain Meade says anything you can rely on me and the sergeants to swear we were absolutely positive it was the enemy all right."

By this time Meade was approaching to see what all the firing was about. He was entirely on John's side over the action taken.

"The only mistake was in firing blank," he declared. "It's the damned umpires who've messed up the whole day for us. Thirty thousand troops engaged, and the two armies have apparently missed one another altogether. One begins to understand South Africa now. We've had orders to meet for the pow-wow by the edge of Cranlow Wood."

"But that chap Medlicott who's one of the gallopers has just told me we're to meet in Six Tree Bottom, and I was to inform you accordingly."

Meade got out his map.

"Well, Six Tree Bottom is a mile nearer. So we'll go there. Get your men together."

The pow-wow was indeed held in Six Tree Bottom; but as the majority of commanding officers in this section of the operations had gone to Cranlow Wood it was not well attended. According to the Chief Umpire it had been a highly important and most interesting day, from which many valuable lessons had been learnt. Nothing was said about the murderous attack on the umpires by John's half-company.

It was then discovered that although the officers' lunch waggon had safely arrived at Six Tree Bottom

the waggons with the men's lunch had presumably gone to Cranlow Wood. However, when the battalion reached Cranlow Wood there was no sign of the men's lunch, but only a very thirsty band waiting to play them home. As there was no lunch for the men the officers of course could not eat theirs, and a dejected battalion formed column to march the twelve dusty miles back to camp.

Tramp-tramp! tramp-tramp! tramp-tramp!

Come lasses and lads,
Take leave of your dads
And away to the maypole hie

Tramp-tramp! Tramp-tramp! Tramp-tramp!

For every fair

Tramp-tramp!

Has a sweetheart there

Tramp-tramp! Tramp-tramp!

"If I could get hold of the barstud as sent our grub to the wrong place I'd make him eat my bloody boots for his supper," Private Bawcock declared. "Gawd, the dust!"

They passed the grey uniforms of the Second Battalion resting by the road, and the band struck up *The Loamshire Ploughboy*.

"Who thought we was the bloody enemy and run for it?" shouted the First Battalion.

The Second Battalion was too tired to shout back a crushing retort.

"Did you barstuds pinch our bloody lunch?" shouted the First Battalion.

The Second Battalion was still mute.

"We'll send back bloody prerambulators to wheel you home," shouted the First Battalion.

One man in the Second Battalion had enough breath to sound a raspberry; but the First Battalion had breath enough for fifty.

Tramp-tramp! Tramp-tramp! Tramp-tramp!

The dust was thicker than ever. John forgot to think about Rose. He could think about nothing except a lemon-squash as big as the Crystal Palace.

Tramp-tramp! Tramp-tramp! Tramp-tramp!

"Can I fall out, sir, please? My feet is getting shocking sore."

"Nobody can fall out unless he's an ambulance case."

Oh, it's my delight on a shiny night
In the season of the year!

Tramp-tramp! Tramp-tramp! Tramp-tramp!

Thank Heaven, the first tents!

"Battalion! 'Shun! Slope arms!"

The band struck up the regimental march to bring the battalion back to camp in style.

For he was a jolly young ploughboy,
A jolly young ploughboy was he.

At last the deck-chairs on the lawn outside the mess marquee, and the tinkle of ice!

Just six o'clock.

The officers of the First Battalion sat drinking their mint juleps and gin fizzes and lemon squashes and whiskies and soda and horses' necks in the warm gold of the August afternoon while they watched with critical eyes the stragglers of the Second Battalion limping into camp.

"And not a man of Ours fell out," observed Pacey-Foote. "Well, that proves it's just as important for a Volunteer battalion to have the right kind of officer as it is for the regulars or the militia or the yeomanry."

There was a murmur of agreement which John in his present mood considered too aggressively self-complacent.

"Of course," snapped the adjutant, who like all adjutants of Volunteer battalions at this date was a regular, in this case a Cumberland Fusilier. "They offered me the adjutancy of the Bayswater Rifles, but I said 'no, thank you' when I found that half the officers were the sons of Westbourne Grove tradesmen. It stands to reason you can't make anything out of material like that."

John looked at Captain Shute. There was something humorous in a man with a head like a button and eyes with as little intelligence as glass bottle-stoppers talking about reason. What was he himself but an animated razor-strop? Their's not to reason why, their's but to do and die. What did a man like Captain Shute think about before he turned over at night to seek sleep? Did he like the Pharisee thank God that he was not as other men who were not captains in a famous Fusilier regiment? No, he would hardly possess as much self-consciousness as would enable him to do that. Probably about now he was wondering if he would be in good form with the grouse this year, and later on in the month he would be wondering if his form with the partridges would be as good or better than or perhaps not so good as his form with the grouse. And then at the end of September he would be able to wonder about his prowess with the pheasants. But what would he have to think about half-way through October? Just his own superiority

again, and the superiority of those like him? Oh, but of course he would have the weather to think about from the point of view of hunting until March, after which there would be the winners of various horse-races to think about until the time for grouse came round again. He never read anything. He could turn over the pages of last week's *Graphic* or this week's *Illustrated London News*. 'This fellow Russell they've been trying for bigamy. Bit of a bounder, what? Says here he was wearing a grey frock-coat and a bright red tie. They ought to have given him three years for that instead of three months. I suppose he's one of these damn Radicals. Damn disgraceful when a fellow like that betrays his own class.' He could turn over the pages of *Punch* and declare that *Punch* was getting deuced dull these days, what? But if you put a book in his hand he would look as much astonished as if you had put a boot in it. Yet he was accounted one of the best adjutants the battalion had ever had. And in justice to him it had to be admitted that there was not a battalion of Volunteers in the whole camp which could excel the First Loamshires in military smartness. Yet it was men like Captain Shute who when promoted to a rank their brains were not capable of sustaining made the kind of muddles which were made in South Africa, made the kind of muddles which had been made to-day at Aldershot. What was the use of training a body of men to be efficient and soldierly if you lacked the brains to ensure that fifteen thousand of them would not miss the fifteen thousand with whom they were supposed to have a battle?

John decided that in joining the Volunteers he had made the mistake of going back on his own convictions.

He was not an Imperialist. He hated the theory of the Empire. There was a good case to be made even against the Roman Empire; but the case against the British Empire was overwhelming. The Boers were an unpleasant people in the way that Roundheads had been unpleasant people. Nevertheless, the almost unanimous opinion of the civilized world which was against Great Britain in this business could not be wrong. The only nation which had defended the action of Great Britain was Italy. Was it a memory of Imperial Rome which had made the Italians sympathetic? Or was it a lingering sentiment of gratitude to English support of the *risorgimento*? Or perhaps the memory of their defeat in Abyssinia four or five years ago had given them the kindness of a fellow feeling?

Yes, it had been a mistake to join the Volunteers, a mistake really to fall in with his father's sudden impulse to establish him at a tutor's in Loamshire instead of taking advantage of Elise's good offices and going abroad until he went up to the University. Well, he certainly should not return to Milbourne now. There should be no more of hammering out rhymes in that dusty arbour of jasmine. Rose would be married in October, and in a few months she would have forgotten him.

John drowsed in his chair: it had been a tiring week. Conversation was murmurous round him.

"Well, I don't care what you say, Pledge, I think they ought to forbid motor-cars at meets."

"But look here, Shute, horses will get used to them very quickly. In fact half the trouble is that drivers and riders are so nervous of what their horses will do that they communicate their nerves to the animals.

You reactionaries may as well get used to it soon as late, because nothing you can say or do will stop the motor-car. My own belief is that in another twenty-five years you'll hardly see a horse on the road."

"It'll be a bad day for England when that happens."

"People talked just like that about railway-trains."

"Well, they did have the decency to put railway-trains on lines. They didn't let them loose on the countryside."

"I'll go further, Shute, and say that in my opinion the advance of the internal-combustion engine means that we shall be flying in another twenty-five years."

"Ha-ha, Pledge. To the moon, I suppose? By gad, you mechanical johnnies make me smile."

A bugle sounded. John pulled himself out of his deck-chair. It was time to get into mess kit.

"You've been sleepin' very sound, my lad," said the adjutant. "Have a good day?"

"We shot up the umpires," John told him.

"Yes, I heard about that. Good job for you I wasn't about. And I hope you'll have something in the nature of a moustache by next August. We're not the American army, you know. Good gad," he exclaimed, looking up the lines from the lawn, "those fellows in the Second Battalion are still mouching in. It's lucky for them I'm not their adjutant. I'd make them hop around. Scandalous lack of discipline. Well, it's time we were all dressin'."

When John walked out of the mess with two or three of his fellow-subalterns next morning at half-past three he felt when he turned into his tent as if he had just finished a novel by Charles Lever.

There were two letters waiting for him when he reached Church Row.

The first was from Helvetia:

BEAR HOTEL,
GRINDELWALD,
July 28th.

My dear John,

I'm afraid you'll hate me for ever, but I have promised to marry Henry Falconer. I know you'll think I'm feeble, and perhaps I am, but mother was simply savage about our evening last May. She got out of me that we had been to Covent Garden before the dance. I couldn't help telling her because she was going to write to Aunt Catherine. I had to promise not to write to you or try to see you. It was the only way, John, really to stop a worse row, because she threatened to tell father about Covent Garden, and Dick too, and Dick can be so objectionable when his pride is hurt. And then Aunt Catherine died and none of her money came to us, and mother seemed to think she had guessed something about me and had altered her will out of spite, but as a matter of fact she used to alter her will every other week. Cummitt told me she had witnessed at least half a dozen different wills. And then I got frightfully depressed by my Aunt Amy who was always talking about my cousin who was killed at Spion Kop and always rubbing it into me about the financial difficulties at home. And really they are serious. Unless Dick makes a good match I don't see how he'll be able to keep up Medlicott. And then we met Henry Falconer in Zürich and he was such a relief after Aunt Amy

and Mother's letters and everything, and I've always been very fond of him, and when he asked me to marry him I said I would. John, I know you won't forgive me, but you must try to understand. I didn't see how I could get through years of being grumbled at and criticized for letting the family down. And I am terribly fond of Henry. So there it is. I can't say any more, but if you could forgive me, John, I wish you would. And please please don't think that I regret a moment of our time together. I shall never forget you.

Rose

The thin foreign notepaper gave to this letter an infinite remoteness in time and space. It lay in John's hand as light as a skeleton leaf, and the faint crackle as he put it back in its envelope was a ghostly sound. She would have written it perhaps sitting on that big wooden balcony overlooking the pastures beyond which towered the Wetterhorn and the Mettenberg and the Eiger, written it perhaps in one of the very chairs in which he had been sitting just over a year ago, ignorant then that she existed. Already she was as far from him again as she had been then. He would write her a letter to Medlicott Hall wishing her happiness, and that would be the end. Rose's letter was completely convincing. The decision she had taken was the best for herself. It was not the result of despair. He was entitled to believe that if other things had been equal Rose would have chosen him in preference to Henry Falconer. It was sweet of her to write that she did not regret a moment of their brief time together. Perhaps years and years hence she would look back to that box in Covent Garden

and the waltzes and the drives in the hansoms and the primroses by the edge of Harting wood and the pear-blossom in the orchard of Lowes Cottage and the moon that first night hanging over Medlicott Hall . . . years and years hence.

John picked up the other letter waiting for him. It was from Miriam Stern.

21 CLAREMOUNT GARDENS,
HAMPSTEAD,
N.W.

Aug. 7, 01.

John dear,

We have been called on some family business to Cracow, and I'm wondering if you would like to come with us. We are all going to stay in an hotel, as I do not feel able to cope with the strictness of existence in the ghetto. We are leaving on Wednesday the fourteenth. I know you are down in camp, but I understand you are expected back by the end of the week. So you can let me know then if you can and will come. I imagine you won't be staying down at Milbourne for August anyway.

I've not heard from you for a long time. You will have a lot of news, I expect.

My love to you.

M. S.

John's heart leapt with gratitude for this invitation which solved the problem of the immediate future. His father and stepmother were with Sir William and Lady Hunter in Worcestershire, where Elise was to remain until the birth of her child. His father was evidently

not anxious for him to be on the scene, because he had already suggested his going down to his Uncle Duncan in Hampshire. John wired immediately to find out whether his father would agree to the Cracow suggestion, and he was made happy by a telegram of consent and a cheque for his travelling expenses by return of post. John was gratified to hear from Mrs Stern that on the whole a passport was advisable. One could never be sure in Galicia that there might not be political trouble, and it was as well to be able to claim the respectable protection of the lion and the unicorn.

John was duly impressed to find that for a nominal fee *We, Henry Charles Keith Petty-Fitzmaurice, Marquess of Lansdowne, etc., etc., etc., Knight of the Most Noble Order of the Garter, a Member of His Majesty's Most Honourable Privy Council, Knight Grand Commander of the Most Exalted Order of the Star of India, Knight Grand Commander of the Most Distinguished Order of St Michael and St George, Knight Grand Commander of the Most Eminent Order of the Indian Empire, etc., etc., etc., His Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs,* was prepared to request and require in the Name of His Majesty passage without let or hindrance and every assistance and protection for Mr John Pendarves Ogilvie, and all that on a folio sheet of paper engraved by copper-plate and crepitating as richly as a £100 note.

When Miriam Stern had first suggested the addition of John Ogilvie to their party her elder son was inclined to oppose it. He had brought back with him from a visit to Warsaw a few years previously that corrosive sense of humiliation which eats so deeply into the heart of childhood. He looked back with fastidious distaste

to the oily corkscrew curls smarmed down over the ears of the fluffy-faced young Jews on their way to the candlelit synagogues when the hush of Friday evening was over the noisy crowded ghetto. He remembered too with the same distaste the monstrous wigs of the married women, and the older men with their fur-trimmed hats and that queer cross between a frock-coat and a cassock into which the gaberdine had developed. He hated these survivals of the past; but what he remembered with the sharpest repulsion was the feeling of exclusion from the normal life of a modern city, and the sudden impingement upon his consciousness of the prejudice and hatred of centuries. That had been an emotional shock to which he did not wish to be exposed for a second time in the company of a Gentile with whom he had been on terms of such intimacy and equality.

"But, Emil," his mother declared, "I am not proposing to submerge you in the Casimierz ghetto at Cracow. We shall stay in an hotel. Such business as I have to discuss will not affect you. You will be enchanted by Cracow, and I was thinking we might go on to Vienna, and perhaps to Budapest and Prague as well. I want Julius to become better acquainted with the fundamental soil of music. And, Julius dear, please don't think I am trying to interfere with your development in saying that. Only, I do feel that you have reached an age when the English scene may exercise a disastrous influence over your music."

"But I've played in all these places already."

"Yes, as a diminutive prodigy, darling, when your surroundings were of comparatively little importance."

"Yes, my dear mother, but how are any decisions

about Julius's musical future to be helped by taking with us such a reminder of home as John Ogilvie?" Emil had demanded. "Confess that you want his company as a relief from the ancestral obligations by which you are expecting to find yourself overwhelmed."

"And if I admit that I want John's company for selfish reasons, will you resent that?" she had asked.

"You know I never resent intellectual honesty," he had answered.

"Well, I'm jolly glad John *is* to be invited," Julius had declared. "I may have some observations to make presently on my musical future, and I rather think John will support me."

So the invitation had been sent, and when John went round to Claremont Gardens to say that he could come Miriam Stern's pleasure in the news was perfected by hearing at the same time about Rose Medlicott. She tried to commiserate with John, but he waved her sympathy aside.

"The news about her and Henry Falconer was a shock for the moment, but I was really prepared for it in a way by the surrender over going to Switzerland, and promising not to write to me. I knew then in my heart that we should never be married."

"But I hope you recognize that the whole burden of fidelity was not laid on the shoulders of Rose?"

"You mean you doubt if I should have had the constancy to wait for two and half years?"

"I'm not going to doubt or disbelieve or believe, John. But it is not being fair to Rose to be so convinced of her weakness without acknowledging to yourself the possibility of your own. You must remember that you were

never tested. You retired to your jasmine-arbour and wrote sonnets, an occupation which is no test of anything except rhyme and metre."

"Not of ideas or emotion?"

"Show me your sonnets."

"I've destroyed them," said John stiffly.

"Why? For their failure to express your ideas and your emotion, eh?"

"For their failure to say anything which had not been better said before."

"Which means that rhyme and metre dominated all else. In the struggle to keep your end up with those two the ideas and the emotion were sacrificed."

"The ideas and the emotion were stale anyway. I realized it was too late in the history of mankind to write love lyrics inspired by the pain of absence from the beloved one."

"Then do you think nobody will write immortal lyrics of love again?"

"I very much doubt if anybody ever will. Most of Tennyson's *Maud* is pretty terrible, but it's better than anything written in that mood since—at any rate in English."

"What about Meredith's *Love in the Valley*?

Under yonder beech-tree single on the green-sward,
Couched with her arms behind her golden head,
Knees and tresses folded to slip and ripple idly,
Lies my young love sleeping in the shade.

Oh, John, it's beautiful. Wouldn't you be proud if you could write such a poem to your Rose?"

"Yes, pleased enough, until I began to think about Propertius and Petrarch and Dante and the Elizabethans,

and if it comes to that Heine and Burns. Meredith sounds very much the literary gent after them. But don't let's talk any more of my sonnets, or any more of Rose . . . I couldn't even write her a letter to wish her happiness which was not stilted . . . her letter to me was far simpler."

"There you are being unfair to yourself, John. The letter she wrote to you, bidding you farewell, had to express facts; yours to her had to express feelings and at the same time disguise them. But I'll say no more about Rose. I'm so glad you're coming with us."

The emotion behind that last sentence welled up and seemed to carry the words away upon a flood in which John had to watch them tossing without power to bring them back to conventional life by a conventional reply.

John took care to read all he could about Polish history, and by the time he had been a week in the ancient capital the restoration of Poland to her rightful position in Europe took a place in his heart with other causes counted lost but to faith still attainable. The old palace of the kings on the Wawel, used by the Austrians as barracks less perhaps from any desire deliberately to abase yet further Polish nationhood than from that Teutonic insensitiveness which despises defeat, was still eloquent of past greatness, and that mound, that hill indeed, raised by Poles with bags of earth brought from all over the world to make a site for the

statue of the patriot Kosciuszko, heaved up from this teeming plain of central Europe to forbid despair.

The hotel in which they were staying was a quiet place overlooking the gardens outside the Florian gate, and during the first fortnight John was often alone, because the others were involved in various visits to distant relatives and friends of the family, against making which Emil and Julius protested loudly but in vain. In one respect only were they successful in having their way, and that was in keeping their Gentile friend out of the business. This gave John an opportunity to visit by himself the museum, the glorious library of the University, and various churches, which he recognized was the only way to see sights. One morning, a morning of hot August sunshine, when the market-place was crowded with vendors under big coloured parasols selling all kinds of fruits and vegetables and gourds, strings of dried funguses, cheese and eggs and poultry, he forsook the gay scene for the glowing twilight of St Mary's church. A late Mass was being said at a side altar by the south door, and he passed through the group of worshippers to sit and meditate in one of the isolated carved pews of the Renaissance in the body of the church which was empty except for a few devotees kneeling before the gleaming jewelled caverns of saintly shrines. The outside of the church, mellowed though its red bricks and steep-pitched copper roof might be by the sun and snow and wind of seven hundred years, did not prepare the visitor for the wonder of colour within. The absence of a great west window as in most of the gothic churches of France and England intensified the solemnity of the twilight stained with rays from the

high windows of honey and emerald and that warm gules which Keats recorded thrown upon the breast of Madeline, that rose-bloom which fell upon her clasped hands. The vaulted roof was blue as night and gilded with a multitude of stars, and above the high altar the sublime triptych of Veit Stoss, the nearest that mortal artist has ever come to portraying the Assumption, was of live gold and azure, carved with such boldness of relief that the angels bearing the body of the Virgin aloft seemed to float away with the Queen of Heaven and hang suspended between earth and sky above the altar. The narrowness of the nave appeared extreme compared with the height, but that accentuated the soaring quality of the interior, the very architectural design being itself an Assumption.

The last time John entered a Catholic church had been in Geneva over a year ago. His mood then had been one of dejection. He had been cold and stiff and hungry after two nights in the open air. He had felt lonely, and he had been intensely aware of his exclusion from the common worship. The dull tawdry little church except for the shelter it had given to his body had seemed less important than the congregation. This church in Cracow reduced the worshippers to such insignificance that he was unconscious of being a stranger. He was absorbed into seven hundred years of prayer, lost like a grain of corn in this vast granary of human aspirations.

This awareness of absorption became a moment of burning acquiescence which were moment used as a measure of time might equally well be called an aeon. During this moment it seemed that in what he could feel was truly a second birth he was humbly accepting the

gift of life now conferred upon him with wider implications. There was not a stone in the church which did not appear to him like a sentient creature, which voiceless indeed but not therefore less eloquent did not welcome him into an immense communion. He was allowed in that moment to perceive the substantial reality of every object in the church, animate or inanimate, to which he responded with a surge of inexpressible love. How long this momentary vision of substantial reality lasted in terms of time by the clock John had no idea, but when he came out of the church the stillness of a hot summer afternoon was over the square. The market women were nodding under their coloured parasols, and business was for a while at a standstill. Suddenly, above the cooing of a myriad pigeons, the trumpeter's horary tune was heard from his room under the eight small spires of the taller of the two towers of St Mary's church. That tune had been blown half-way through the thirteenth century to warn the city that the Tartar hordes were at hand. An arrow had pierced the watchman's throat before his tune was finished, and ever since, without missing an hour of the day or night, trumpeter after trumpeter had blown that same tune from the four windows of that room at the top of the church tower and ever since had ended on the same wavering note, the last note blown by the watchman before the Tartar arrow pierced his throat. Eastward the trumpeters had blown defiance to the Tartar, and southward they had blown defiance to the Turk. To the west they had proclaimed that Poland was the guardian of Europe against Mahomet and to the north they had given warning that she stood firm against Luther.

"I say, aren't you going to have any lunch to-day?" John heard himself asked while he was listening to that trumpet-call of time sounding high above the sun-drowsed market square and the slumberous cooing of a myriad pigeons. He turned to see Julius beside him.

"Is it lunch-time?"

"It's three o'clock."

"Great Scott, it wasn't noon when I went into that church. I thought I was about twenty minutes and I've been in there three hours."

"You must have gone to sleep."

"I suppose I must have, but I wasn't aware of waking. I seemed to be more than usually wide awake all the time. In fact I've had rather a strange experience."

"What was it?"

"It's impossible to put into words. You can't convey a dream to anybody else."

"So you were asleep."

"No, no. I wasn't actually dreaming. At least I'm almost certain I wasn't. I only used a dream as a comparison. If I tell you that in one instant I fell as deeply in love with the whole of life as I fell in love once with a girl, what will that mean to you? Nothing. It cannot possibly mean anything. The importance of the overwhelming experience is for myself alone. Since I went into that church you have become a richer and a larger personality to me, but the only result of that, so far as you are concerned, is that I have made you wonder where I was while you were at lunch."

"As a matter of fact," Julius said, "I think I can understand, because I had the same kind of experience myself at Fontainebleau last summer. Only, I was sitting under

an oak-tree in the forest when it happened. I suddenly loved every human being and every tree and every bird. Indeed I seemed to see people and trees and birds and even houses and furniture for the first time. I didn't say anything about it then because I didn't want to be told it was a sign that the doctor's treatment was doing me good. And now comes the disappointment. I thought that when I started to play again in public I should be able to convey that experience to others with my violin. Yet apparently I couldn't."

"But you had a great success."

"Yes, but the same kind of success I had had when I was quite a kid. Marvellous technique! Astounding virtuosity! But no recognition that I had changed in myself."

"I don't think critics ever like taking risks in the way of giving a definite opinion. They've been frightened by the mistakes of their predecessors."

"Yes, but in this case I believe I'm to blame, not the critics or the public. I haven't discovered how to apply my virtuosity. Emil has a theory that in another year or two I shall merely be a first-class professional violinist, perhaps always able to attract an audience, but incapable of adding anything to the stature of the violinist. And if I wanted further proof of what I've been coming to think for some time now I was given it last night."

The previous evening there had been a gathering in the studio of a well-known Cracow painter at which all the artists had talked politics and all the politicians had discussed art. Poems had been recited, songs had been sung. People had sat crowded together on wide divans, holding hands and dreaming and joining in

choruses. A girl with corn-coloured hair had played impromptus and preludes and mazurkas of Chopin winding up with the Étude in C minor which he wrote in 1831 at Stuttgart on hearing the news that the Russians had taken Warsaw. The audience in the studio had responded emotionally to the facile indignation and despair of the music, and when later on Julius, declining the partnership of the girl with the corn-coloured hair, had played an austere sonata of Bach he had got into his head that his listeners were bored.

"But, Julius, as Emil told you last night, you can't judge your playing by its effect on that kind of audience, or at any rate on that kind of audience on that kind of occasion. Besides, only one or two people fidgeted, and you must remember we were all rather squashed up and some of us pretty uncomfortable."

"Whatever you or Emil or my mother may say," the younger boy insisted, "the grim fact remains that I could not command them with my playing. I perfectly understand the reason. And it is because I do understand the reason that I have decided to give up playing in public for the next two years. When I gave up before it was because I was forced to give up by illness, and I was all the time so resentful that my silence was not of the least use to my development as an artist. I was not absorbing as I should have been. I was continually giving out the wrong kind of emotion. Besides, mother is right about the effect of England on music, or at any rate on fiddling. Small green meadows and rose-hung cottages are all right for flutes, but they make the violin sound too insistent. Sometimes I have felt like a beggar showing his sores to win charity. I think I'll remain for

two years in the middle of the plain of Hungary. Or perhaps I'll cross the Atlantic and stay in some place like Kansas."

"Why not the Sahara while you're about it?"

"The Sahara isn't fertile. I should revert there to a primitive racial type. It would be a kind of artistic Zionism. The Jew flourishes in the swarm. Well, for a while I want to get away from the swarm; but I could not bear a sterile solitude, and instead of living with people I want to live for awhile with innumerable ears of corn grown to be devoured by masses of people. But what's the good of trying to express myself in words? You could not communicate to me the effect of your three hours in that church. The fact that we can both agree we have experienced the incommunicable is a strong tie between us. You have your secret. I have my secret. But neither of us is envious of the other's secret. And now come on, let's get back to the hotel. Mother was talking about an expedition to the salt mines of Wieliczka. But it's too late to start to-day."

With these words Julius took John's arm, and they wandered away across the sun-drowsed market-square and on under the Florian gate toward the hotel.

"Why, John, where have you been?" exclaimed Mrs Stern.

"He was exploring churches," Julius put in quickly, "and didn't realize it was so late."

Next morning about ten o'clock the party set out to drive to Wieliczka. The road was deep with yellowish dust and thronged all the way by harvest traffic.

"All this labour and grind and competition for so little," exclaimed Emil. "What a muddle the world is in!"

"Much less of a muddle here than in the towns," his mother suggested.

"That's just a sentimental point of view," he scoffed. "It's no pleasanter to slave to sow and cut and carry corn than to slave in a factory. Workers on the land have a better chance to grab something from their neighbours. That's the only reason why they seem more content with their lot. I was walking round Casimierz this morning and thinking how wretched the inhabitants would be if the ghetto were emptied to-morrow and those bewigged Jewish women and those cheesy green-faced youths with fluffy beginnings of beards and those dignified old Shylocks were all emptied out of it and made to till these fields, to cut grass for hay, to tend geese, and carry out all the rest of this dreary agricultural grind."

"If agricultural labourers and factory labourers are equally slaves," John asked, "who's going to do the work under your scheme for the improvement of everything?"

"Machinery."

"I don't think machinery has brought so much happiness to humanity."

"No, because men are still to a great extent the slaves of the machines they have invented. But they will end by controlling them," Emil argued.

"Or they may not," John retorted. "It's at least just as probable that machines will enslave men more completely than they have already. Besides, in the struggle with machines men will forget what to do with wealth and leisure, and so when they have tamed their own inventions they'll expire of boredom. I don't believe you'd help any of these peasants by giving them labour-saving devices. I've always had a great sympathy with

the Luddites, and I'm inclined to think that the names of Watt and Stephenson should be execrated instead of being extolled."

Emil shook his head.

"My poor John, this is just shoddy Ruskinism that you're talking. Do try to realize that the twentieth century has begun."

"Well, if I'm talking shoddy Ruskinism you're the victim of numerical superstition. You talk as if the beginning of a new century was a certain talisman to progress. We think of history in terms of centuries for convenience, but if you made the middle of a century the starting-point you could get just as convenient a set of epochs."

"I suppose you'll allow that there is such an abstraction as progress?" Emil asked sarcastically.

"I'll allow motion, but I'm not convinced of progress. Suppose that the universe is based on a central point which some will call God and suppose that man moves round and round this central point in a series of widening circles. The result will be that, although by moving in wider circle we have an illusion of doing more and seeing more and so of leading what we fancy is a fuller and richer life, we shall all the while be moving further away from that central point. Centrifugal movement has no more right to the name of progress than centripetal movement."

"You're ascribing a false value to your central point by suggesting its divinity," Emil pointed out.

"You are ascribing an equally false value to your onward movement. Because the usual result of a human being's walking backward is that he bumps into something we conceive by a false analogy that everything must move forward if it is to move rationally and usefully.

We fancy that the material conditions of our forbears were intolerable because we have outlived . . . ”

“Exactly, outlived them,” Emil put in, “that’s the point.”

“No, it’s not the point at all. I won’t say ‘outlived’, I’ll say ‘passed beyond’. We are used, let us say, to railway trains and therefore we pity our great grandfathers who had to travel in coaches. But they didn’t pity themselves for their methods of conveyance. Perhaps in this marvellous century of which you hope so much man will learn to fly. Are you at this moment a wretched object of compassion because you can’t fly to these salt mines in a couple of minutes instead of driving there in a carriage behind a pair of horses?”

“That’s a most superficial illustration. I’m not asking you to accept rapidity of movement as the *summum bonum*. There is such a thing as intellectual progress.”

“All right. We’ll agree. But intellectual progress destroys as much as it builds. Which would you sooner be without, the *Iliad* or the *Origin of Species*? ”

“That’s another completely superficial argument,” insisted Emil. “The *Iliad* leads ultimately to the *Origin of Species*. For all we know palæolithic man may have had an *Iliad* much more wonderful than ours. And in our ignorance we do not miss it. Oh, it’s really ridiculous to suspect progress. Unless we can believe in a progressive amelioration of life we may as well call it a stupendous lunatic asylum.”

“But, Emil, what philosophical grounds have you for optimism? You refuse to believe in a Creator willing good to His creation. How then can you feel this extraordinary confidence in the infallible instinct of mass

humanity to choose the true, the good and the beautiful? What evidence can you offer on behalf of humanity? I suppose you'll tell me that medical knowledge is now greater than it was and that civilized nations have abandoned the habit of torture as a legal instrument. I'll agree with you every time that lots of things are better nowadays than they were, but you'll have to agree with me that lots of things are worse. You are really sustained by what I maintain is an illogical belief that somehow or other *everything* is for the best. We benefit one part of humanity with machinery at the expense of the other part. Your optimism insists that the whole of mankind must ultimately benefit. Why? I should have thought that the history of your own race would alone have made you distrust this humanitarianism which as it seems to me is based on a most inadequate appreciation of human folly and wickedness when pride leads man to fancy himself capable of separation from God, or if that is asking you to assume the existence of a God whose existence you cannot persuade yourself to accept, I will say when pride leads man to suppose himself to be the equivalent of God."

"Very well then," Emil allowed, "we'll accept for the moment your God. Are you going to claim that this omniscient and omnipotent Being is standing by, just watching the creatures of Himself blunder recklessly along what they imagine to be progress but which His omniscience knows to be nothing of the sort and which His omnipotence refuses to correct?"

"Well, of course, that brings up the question whether this life is the only life."

"Yes, exactly. In order to correct the grotesque

picture of this universe involved by a belief in a personal creator you have to invent another life for which you allow your imagination full freedom to make it perfect. You talk about pride, my dear John, but the unbeliever's pride is modesty itself compared with the pride of the believer who thinks he can create by the supine mental process he calls faith a better world than his God has made of the one in which he finds himself. He then proceeds to exalt this mental process to the same level as the toleration and comprehension brought about by inexorable progress which we all call love, and what is more he refuses to allow those without faith to possess this love, because unless he is able to make a corner of all the virtues he is afraid that this faith of his will be exposed as the mental trick it is."

"Well, that brings the argument to a standstill," said John. "First because I'm not at all sure that I have any of this despised faith, and secondly because if I had it would probably be a state of mind that was incom-
municable."

"And that being so," Mrs Stern put in, "won't you two extremely loquacious philosophers lean back and sniff the delicious perfume from that cartload of pumpkins which is passing us at this moment?"

Julius shouted with laughter.

"Now there is an act of faith if you like! Our beloved mother sees the golden pumpkins and thinks they smell as delicious as they look, but what she's really smelling is this basket of pears which I bought to refresh ourselves upon the weary journey to the salt mines of Wieliczka. All the same, Emil, I'm not going to support you in pitying these harvesters. While you've been jabbering

I've been imagining that I should like nothing better than to dress myself like a gipsy and play my way across this fat flat countryside of ripening corn and fruit."

"Romantic rot!" scoffed Emil.

"Neither romantic nor rot," his brother retorted. "To dress myself as a gipsy would be essentially practical and to play to an audience who paid *after* hearing me instead of beforehand would be a very very wise experiment. At any rate, whatever you may say, Emil, I am going to settle down somewhere in Bohemia or Galicia or Hungary or perhaps even in Roumania and not see London or Paris or New York for at least two years."

"Dear Julius, this is a most revolutionary step," said his mother. "And must I make up my mind to such an exile?"

"If you insist on living with me," her younger son replied, "but I'd really much rather live alone."

"At fifteen?" she queried. "I hate to be a spoil-sport, but I really don't think that's quite feasible."

"Oh, I knew you wouldn't agree to my having a house of my own, though of course there is no reason why I shouldn't. If I'm fit to play a concerto before an audience I'm fit to have my own house. Still, I'm not unreasonable. I'll agree to live with some nice family provided I'm given a guarantee against excessive interference. All the same I should feel safer in a house of my own."

"I think Julius is absolutely right," John put in with enthusiasm. "He can escape from this protracted adolescence to which we are doomed by our gentlemanly education."

"As usual you are wrong," Emil contradicted. "This protracted adolescence as you call it is the secret of the

strength of England. If you had even the most superficial knowledge of biology you would hardly have failed to note that the higher the animal the longer the period of his helplessness in youth. The new-born calf is more mature than the new-born kitten. The new-born kitten is more mature than the new-born ape, and the most helpless of them all is the new-born baby. On that analogy the protracted education of the Englishman leads to a richer and more efficient maturity than the precocious development of the Latin races, just as their moderately protracted education produces a richer and more efficient maturity than that of savages who make mere puberty the test of age."

"Hear, hear! Loud and prolonged cheers!" Julius shouted, waving his straw hat, and jumping up and down on the seat of the carriage to the astonishment of the wayfaring peasants who turned to stare at him from bovine eyes.

"The analogy might be all right if it could be sustained," said John. "But in the first place I don't accept what you call the richer and more efficient maturity of the Englishman, though I will admit that he often scores over the foreigner by the disconcerting way in which he applies to maturity the standards of judgment acquired during this protracted youth of his. You get it in that probably fictitious story of Drake and the bowls. If Drake really stopped to finish his game of bowls before he attacked the Spanish fleet he was behaving like a schoolboy, and we are taught by our fatuous history books to admire such behaviour. Apparently you honestly do admire such behaviour, though I fancy you'd find it pretty tiresome if you ever came up against it outside

the pages of a tendentious history book. Kipling has known better than any Englishman how to exploit English qualities which I do not believe exist in fact. Yet when his idealized strong silent soldiers made asses of themselves in South Africa the public read the *Daily Mail* and failed to see anything admirable in sporting behaviour which led to completely underestimating the enemy they were dealing with and so to some pretty ignominious surrenders and a great deal of inexcusable loss of life. Even Shakespeare could not help glorifying this sporting attitude. His Henry V is typical of what an Englishman wants to fancy the English man of action is like. Tell the average man that Henry V was in fact an ambitious brilliant theological bigot, and you would be stared at. The average man imagines he was something like C. B. Fry in armour."

"All of what you have said entirely bears out my contention," said Emil. "The Frenchman cannot stand up to the well-trained cold vitality of the Englishman."

"No really, Emil, I can't allow you to pretend this enthusiasm for a public-school education. How many times have I heard you rail at its effect on your little schoolfellows!"

"Of course he does," Julius put in. "It's only because he's jealous of his distinguished younger brother's precocious appearance upon the scene of life that he's talking like this."

"Do you really suppose, my good ass, that because you've been allowed to appear on a concert platform dressed like a photographer's dream you have therefore appeared upon the scene of life?" the elder brother demanded scornfully.

"More than you have anyway. Don't listen to him, John. When I have my house in the middle of acres and acres of flat cornland you shall come and stay with me and we'll discuss all sorts of things that Emil would never understand, not even if he was still going to school when he was forty."

"It's impossible to argue with you two," Emil declared loftily. "You're like a couple of kids playing with sand-castles."

"Protracted adolescence! Protracted adolescence!" Julius shouted again. "There you are, you fool . . ."

"Please, Julius dear," his mother interposed, "please don't let us descend from discussion into hurling stupid epithets."

"Well, when John and I agree that it's nothing but dull convention which compels everybody to grow up at the same moment, we're told by Doctor Emil, A.S.S., that a protracted adolescence is good for us and will make us men of mark in the future; but the reason that Professor Emil, A.S.S., brings forward against the advantage of our growing up is that our growing up is a kid's game. I may be only a poor little uneducated freak of a fiddler, but at any rate I have a bit more logic than that."

"But, Julius dear, are you absolutely serious about wanting to retire like this into the heart of Europe?" his mother asked curiously.

"Quite serious. How am I going to learn to express the emotional state of this time of ours in terms of Western man except by living in the heart of Europe? England has many advantages, but it has one great disadvantage for an interpreter of emotion, which is that it is on the

fringe of Europe. It is excluded from the common hopes and fears. You know that as well as I do, mother. In fact you practically said as much to me yourself."

"But why do you want to be away from me—away from us?"

"Because you and Emil are as completely surrounded by salt water as England is."

"I wish you wouldn't keep on saying England when you mean England, Scotland and Wales," John protested.

"Oh well, England stands for all three nowadays, and Great Britain sounds more like a bird than a country," Julius said, and with no more attention to the interruption than if it had been a piece of pedantry on the part of John he went quickly on. "Mother, I really am serious. I won't insist on being absolutely alone. But I want it to be *my* house. I said just now I would live with some family. But I've already realized that even to give way so far would spoil the great experiment. And so I'm afraid I'll have to say I can't live *en pension* with some family who'll think that by calling me Herr Stern or Monsieur Stern or Pan Stern or Whatever they call you in Hungary Stern they can treat me like an infant in every other way. Find some elderly slightly decayed woman of the world with a profound dislike of music, mother, who will keep house for me and whom you can make financially responsible if you like, but I will not be boarded out. And she is not to be a Jewess. I don't want to have to contend with ingrowing mental toe-nails."

"Perhaps it could be managed," Mrs Stern said pensively. She was thinking that her younger son had unquestionably a right to choose his immediate future

since it was he who had paid for so much of the comfort and freedom his mother and elder brother had enjoyed during these last six or seven years. Might not his instinct be leading him toward a wise decision? Emil had prophesied that his precocious genius would burn itself out. Were she to thwart Julius now and that were to happen, might he not have just cause to reproach her for the rest of his life? Might not the fading out of so many musical prodigies be due to the abuse of their genius by domestic ties? If she gave way to this whim of Julius what harm would be done except to conventional ideas? Moreover, it probably was not a mere whim. Julius had no doubt been pondering over this move for a long time. It had always been his habit to appear to improvise. In any case she had already granted both Emil and him a freedom to develop outside the strict traditions of their race. She had recognized from the day they were born their independence of the age-long honoured Jewish worship of parents. That had been the cause of poor Ernest's jealousy. He had always considered her treatment of them to be an infringement of his own rights as husband and father. The death of Ernest had given her liberty to achieve what she had always flattered herself was a superior attitude toward her children. Logic demanded that she should not begin to interfere with their development now in the interests of what after all was no more than a prejudice which was incapable of allowing for exceptions. Emil had wished to go to St James's School. Emil wished now to go on from there to Oxford. If Emil received a conventional education it was his own choice. Why must Julius be denied his own choice? Yes, and he was

probably right. Some profound instinct was guiding him. He expected to renew himself in this heart of Europe. He had been right to challenge her with the fact that it was she who had first put into words a mistrust of England for a musician. What had given him this *heimweh* . . . indeed, by the way he spoke of those corn-fields it really could be called this *heimweh* for the heart of Europe? She was not so unimaginative but that she could divine his longing to grow for awhile with the corn, to seek those wide horizons undiscoverable in the green miniatures of England except beside the sea, 'the unplumbed salt estranging sea' which when one began to ponder upon it appeared as the enemy of all music that was not its own.

Miriam Stern looked at her two sons who with their backs to the horses were still arguing with John on the seat beside herself. It was surprising how Emil still kept at seventeen the fragile charm of his looks. It seemed as if he would pass from boyhood into manhood without being condemned to linger in that awkward indeterminate age between the two. Julius on the other hand was already the victim of manhood's grotesque invasion of youth. A moustache much too full for his years merely drew attention to a mouth less finely cut than Emil's without concealing it at all. His voice had broken to a resonant bass preposterously out of keeping with his small body. Straight heavy eyebrows, the division between which was darkened by hairs like mountains on an ill-drawn map while the thickness of them was accentuated by the jutting musical brow, gave those smoke-dark eyes, clear as a child's, a sullen shadow. It might be the consciousness of his own

clumsy youth which had inspired this impulse to retire. The call of Central Europe might not be due so much to his ancestral origins as to a desire to expand and grow without being reminded by his surroundings of the ugly side of the process.

The carriage was passing a striped blue-and-white house with a high steep roof shaded by two large cherry-trees. In such a house she saw Julius installed, not beside a high road, but away from dusty thoroughfares in the middle of a golden plain of wheat beneath a pavilion of sky which descended to the level horizon on every side. The house was easy enough to conjure up. What was less easy to conjure up was that elderly decayed housekeeper. She was not to be Jewish? That was no doubt partly an expression of Julius's prejudice, which must have been roused by the sight of those bewigged Jewesses in Casimierz. A Frenchwoman would be the most suitable *dame de compagnie*, but how to find the right Frenchwoman who would be willing to tolerate even for two years that banishment from her country which the French dreaded above any other nation? The task might be impossible. It would almost inevitably have to be a woman of whatever country was decided upon for this retreat. Next week they would leave Cracow and explore within the boundaries of the Austrian Empire. Nothing should persuade her to consent to his living over the Russian border, and Roumania was a fantastic suggestion.

If now it had been John who had announced his determination to retreat like this, how easy it would be to give him the perfect housekeeper in herself! Not that John would choose the plains of Central Europe.

For him and her it should be Spain or Italy. The carnations and fountains of the Alcazar at Seville . . . the orange groves of Sorrento . . . the Roman pines . . . the Roman Campagna . . . two in the Campagna . . . tombs and aromatic weeds and the arches of the broken aqueduct . . . silence and passion, joy and peace, an everlasting wash of air . . . Rome's ghost . . .

The carriage stopped beside a restaurant on the outskirts of Wieliczka where as usual they had *barszcz* and declared as they always did how much better the Polish way of making beetroot soup was than the Russian, and after the *barszcz* they had carp which was as nasty as carp can be and tasted as carp always does of nothing except mud. It was about one o'clock when they reached the offices of the salt mine, an ugly pile of modern buildings with geometrical flower-beds in front scantily planted with drooping dusty asters and coxcombs and the bedraggled plumes of love-lies-bleeding.

Before they descended into the mine by one of the cages they were given green velveteen caps and loose drab coats to protect them against the salt, which to their disappointment was not the glittering white they had expected but a dirty slimy grey. The part of the mine which was shown to visitors resembled an abandoned exhibition. The chapels with their chandeliers and statues of salt were hardly credible as serious places of worship in spite of the guide's assurance that Mass was sometimes said in them and that they were then thronged with devout miners.

"Well, anyway we know now what Lot's wife looked like," Julius observed, contemplating one of the carved figures in the great dancing-hall.

In another of these caverns was a museum of the various things found during the operations of nearly a thousand years, and here too were examples of the antique tools for cutting the salt, and the clumsy utensils for carrying it to the surface up hundreds of feet of wooden ladders. The guide insisted a great deal on the superiority of modern conditions and pointed with pride to the bulbs of electric light everywhere.

Emil was anxious to see the miners at work to-day.

"This is like an empty aquarium," he declared.

They had reached one of the subterranean ponds, a sheet of immotionable green water some fifty yards long into whose vitreous depths they stood staring across a wooden railing. The guide produced the stock stories of drowned men and women which were to be expected from such an appropriate setting, and Julius disconcerted him by saying that he had always heard you could not drown when water contained more than a certain proportion of salt.

The guide shrugged his shoulders, and suggested that perhaps the victims had died of the cold. That several had been found dead in this expanse of water was undeniable.

"It looks like an enormous piece of angelica, doesn't it?" Julius exclaimed.

Emil returned to the miners of to-day, and the guide said that if the young *herren* would not mind a longish walk along a tunnel which would involve a good deal of stooping here and there and a good deal of ladder-

climbing he could give them a glimpse of the miners actually at work. There were over a thousand of them employed at present.

"But I am afraid that the *gnädige frau* will find the exertion too tiring," the guide added.

"Then I'll walk slowly back to the cage," said Mrs Stern. "I'm sure I can find my way."

The guide held up his hands in horror. Such a suggestion struck at the roots of his profession. He declared that an attempt to find her way back alone might easily end in her never reaching the surface alive. There were countless tunnels and galleries in which she might be lost for ever to sight and sound. He could not undertake to conduct the young *herren* to the active part of the mine unless the *gnädige frau* promised in the most solemn way not to move from the side of this lake. There was a bench on which she could repose herself, and the slight soreness of the throat set up by breathing the salty air for another half-hour would pass off within a few moments of being in the fresh air again.

"I'll stay with you," John volunteered. "I don't in the least want to see the miners of to-day at work. And this queer green lake rather fascinates me."

So it was arranged. The guide, with Emil and Julius, vanished round a bend in the tunnel. Miriam Stern remained behind with John. For two or three minutes neither of them broke the silence which followed the departure of the others.

"Are you enjoying yourself in Cracow, John?" she asked abruptly at last. She was feeling that if she did not say something soon not a word would be said by either while they stayed here alone, for the effect of staring down

at this salty glaciuous sheet of water was to freeze the body and mind into an immobility that was cataleptic. Hence what was superficially a polite enquiry, although as she made it Miriam Stern was aware of longing for an answer which would spring from deeps more profound than the bottom of this berylline expanse of water.

"Well, you know I am," he replied.

She must press him. To sit here in this silence below the teeming life of the sunny earth above and find him no more responsive than the motionless pool at her feet was unendurable. They would turn to pillars of salt themselves.

"As much as you enjoyed Fontainebleau last year?" she asked.

"I always enjoy being with you whether it's Hampstead or Fontainebleau or Cracow."

"In a way I wish it were winter, John. Cracow is exquisite in winter under the snow. Sleighbells and tinkling ice. A warm room and a white world. Not this unplumbed salt estranging sea."

"Why are you quoting Matthew Arnold?"

"I was quoting it to myself as we drove along, thinking of the problem of Julius's future, thinking that the sea was jealous of all music except its own. And now I'm quoting it because this underground lake in front of us is just as unplumbed and salt and estranging as the sea itself."

"To music?"

"Yes, to the music of two people . . . or the music two people could make."

Oh, Miriam, what possesses you to talk like this? If he responds to this warmth because all else is so chill what will it

profit you? Fool, fool that you are, talk about Julius again. Talk about Emil. Talk about anything that will keep you sane.

"The music two people could make," he was echoing in a voice as still and cold as the voice of one of those statues of carven salt, should it speak.

If that glassy pool were a mirror, you would not thus tempt yourself to folly. You are not buried here for ever. Within an hour you will be standing in the sun again, standing in it like one of those drooping dusty asters in front of the offices of the mine.

"I wonder what you meant by that?" he was whispering to himself.

And well may you wonder, John. But I do not wonder. I know that fate by bringing me down into this stuffily warm but yet icily cold salt mine has shown me what the rest of my life will be like if I reject this moment. The very salt I eat will be bitter with the thought of what I lost. Here underground will be all the savour of salt for ever and ever not to be tasted again until the sharpness of death. You wonder what I meant by that? I meant that I desire you to take me, John, if only with the haphazard curiosity of youth. John, how can you sit as motionless as this infernal green sheet of water when I burn beside you? When I burn in the frigidity of stuffy warmth which encompasses us, this unnatural frigidity, John? For though twenty years stretch between us they have been shrivelled down here below the sunny earth to nothingness. Here we are both equally alive because round us is nothing except lifelessness.

"Can you not see what I meant, John?" she asked, and taking his face between her hands she kissed him on the lips.

He held for a while her ivory hand.

"The warmth of summer when she outsteps June to lull the blossom of a windblown May," he murmured at last, half to himself.

"I don't recall that quotation, John."

"Well, no, as a matter of fact it just came into my head at that moment."

"I shall have to fall back on another poet for my answer, John . . . Thou art thy mother's glass, and she in thee calls back the lovely April of her prime."

He was silent. Her kiss was seeming to him the first commentary of life upon that sudden expansion of the mind and abrupt deepening of the emotions which had occurred yesterday during those mysteriously swift three hours of meditation in the church of St Mary. He had suspected that the mental experience signified a passage from one plane of development to another almost like moving up to a higher class in school, and his inward response to that kiss was the proof of it. If he looked back to himself as he was so short a time back as yesterday morning he could not imagine how that creature he was then would have behaved in these circumstances. Dived into the salt green pool to escape from the embarrassment of this occasion? Yes, he would have been capable even of that. But yesterday he had fallen in love with life, and already with that kiss life had accepted him. He was no longer a youth preoccupied with the petty egotisms of his status. He was ready now to respond to experience without regard to any wounds it might inflict upon his own self-esteem. When he had fallen in love with Rose he had had to tell two other women about his passion in order that from them he might receive

the approbation and encouragement he wanted to assure himself of the authenticity of that passion. How ridiculous! Imagine confiding in Elise that he had kissed the woman whom she had instantly recognized to be in love with him! And was he in love with her? Not if he was to judge by the way love for Rose had struck him.

"You are wondering whether you are glad or sorry that I kissed you," she challenged.

"I kissed *you*," he replied quickly.

"You would not have done so, John, of your own accord."

"I should have lacked the confidence in myself. I should have been afraid you would be angry with me, or worse that you would laugh at me."

"But you don't kiss me again."

John was already wise enough to know that if he clumsily answered this by taking her in his arms her pride would be wounded.

"No, because I don't like the idea of calculating that we have only so many minutes before Emil and Julius come back, and stopping when we think we ought to stop if we want to appear composed and indifferent when they do come back."

"You did not yield so easily to prudence that April day at the cottage when . . . ah, John, when I have dreamed myself young again in your arms don't let me wake with all the signs of age upon me. There, I promise you that shall be the last time you find me making comparisons from the past. And never think for an instant, John, I am idiotic enough to believe that any woman, least of all myself, can ever carry you again so high above this world as your first love. If I envy

you that first love, my dear, it is only because I never had a first love in the April of my prime. But, fling prudence on one side, my dearest, and hold me in your arms another instant or two, even if when I make such a request I do feel like a Pluto who has dragged his Proserpine from the golden air of earth to subterranean shades."

"It is strange," he said, "when you kiss me I feel that I am drinking wisdom like wine. With Rose every kiss was a fresh despair. Your kisses are a pledge of contentment."

"Ah, John, for you perhaps, but not for me, my dear. On you the south wind of love begins to blow: for me it is still in the east, an east wind at summer's end which will wither all the late roses, not an east wind of May which shrivels the blossom but leaves the fruit to set."

Miriam Stern sat upright on the bench beside the salt pond, and seemed to shake herself.

"There, that's the end of my lamentations, John," she declared. "I care for nothing but that you should love me in the way my love may serve you for as long as it does serve you, and that when the inevitable moment comes when you feel our intimacy as a tie you should have the courage to tell me so; I promise you that I will have the resolution to accept the fact with so light a tax upon your kindness, my dear, that when our love which began with friendship turns back to friendship, that friendship will be not merely untarnished but exquisitely enriched by the passionate emotion which has been added to it."

For another twenty minutes they sat talking about the

best way of carrying out for Julius the plan on which he had set his heart.

"The woman is the difficulty, John."

"I don't think so. I think you should get a good practical housekeeper, and visit him yourself fairly often. He has a notion to read a great deal."

"But who is to direct this reading?"

"He has enough intelligence to direct himself. After all, he is not aiming to be a scholar. Let his reading be uncritical. What harm will it do? Of course, I'll admit that I am tremendously anxious to see how the experiment works. I have believed for so long that we kill artists nowadays by too much interference with them at the really impressionable age that I want to see Julius prove my theory. Very few young people are as lucky as myself. I escaped from the hideous bondage of school when I was seventeen and shall be able to claim that before I was nineteen I had learned more about love than most people at the mercy of a public-school education learn all their lives. The only pity is that I didn't escape when I was fifteen, though perhaps at fifteen I was not as ripe for independence as Julius is."

"Yes, and perhaps the long struggle against discipline is the best discipline of all."

"If it does not have to be carried out too long. Fancy me at school until a week or two ago. A ghastly thought! And I don't think it's good even for people who have no artistic aspirations. That last year gives them a completely false idea of their importance, from which many of them never recover. We all know the man who declares that his school days were the happiest of his life. We are apt to consider such a fellow a humbug, but I don't a bit

believe he's a humbug. I believe he's speaking the truth. He's thinking about his brief hour of importance when small boys looked upon him as a king and to all his contemporaries he was hail fellow, well met. I can easily understand such a man for the rest of his life, perhaps that of a Civil Servant always subject to the criticism of the man above him, sighing for his school-days, which in retrospect must appear like his twenty-four hours of sovereignty as Caliph to the Bagdad porter."

"Still, it is rather an alarming experiment," the mother demurred. "It's like one of those chemical experiments one did in childhood and thought all the while there would be an explosion. No doubt we have suffered too much during the nineteenth century from an exaggerated worship of superficial respectability which has inculcated in us a dread of allowing the least freedom to the young, but to allow a boy of fifteen to be his own master to the extent we are proposing to let Julius be his own master does seem a somewhat excessive reaction."

"All I can say is that no discipline except self-discipline has had any beneficial effect on me since I made up my mind that school was a protracted bore. I'm not going to suggest that children should escape discipline from the start; but Julius has had the discipline that must accompany a stiff apprenticeship to art. Moreover, on top of that he has had to cultivate self-discipline under the criticism of an audience. What will you do with him if he is not allowed his house in the cornfields? You wouldn't send him to school? That's unimaginable."

"I hope I'm not behaving with ridiculous weakness over Julius merely because I feel that I am myself open to criticism. Man is ever a propitiating animal."

The East Wind

"I am convinced that by doing what Julius wants you will help him as an artist," affirmed John, who at the moment felt at least thirty years older than Julius.

"Emil seemed a little doubtful," she reminded him.

"I think if one had a younger brother one would always feel a little doubtful about him. Besides, Emil is so sure of his own education for the next five or six years to come, which happens to be a perfectly conventional education, that he's bound to regard Julius's plans for himself as self-indulgence."

"But what will Julius do for company?"

"I suppose he will make friends with the country people. That will be easy at his age. And I think one of the curses of modern existence in Europe is the deliberate separation of class from class which as far as I can make out is more rigorous in England than anywhere. As a matter of fact it would do Emil a lot of good to live with the people for a while. All this doctrinaire humanitarianism of his will land him in a muddle one day unless he does. He'll be coming back presently, full of the wrongs of Galician miners; but put him down among them and he would have as much chance of establishing a real intimacy with them as with the giraffes at the Zoo."

Soon after this Emil and Julius returned with the guide, and as John had prophesied Emil was scornfully eloquent upon the conditions of labour in the salt mines. For this eloquence both John and Miriam Stern were grateful, because in spite of their having so carefully prepared for the return of Emil both feared lest his quick eye should detect the change in their relationship which had occurred during that wait beside the pond. He was

apparently too much preoccupied, however, with the wrongs of labour. But presently Miriam Stern forgot about Emil in her own dread that when they all emerged into the August sunlight after their sojourn in the depths John would see her with changed eyes, and yielding to the cruelty of the hot bright air turn from her in contempt. She felt inclined to look back like a second Eurydice and vanish into the darkness below. It was not until he touched her hand when they sat back in the carriage to be driven home that she was reassured. And then in a contented languor she let the dusty miles go by, aware that the three boys were arguing with as much vigour and volubility as during the drive out from Cracow that morning, but living intensely all the while within her own dream.

Fourteen hours later when the sky was paling at dawn's approach Miriam Stern put out her hand to detain John for another minute or two before he left her room.

"I have made a resolve which you must help me to keep, my dear. These hours have been so much more perfect than anything I had ever dreamed of that I cannot bear to contemplate spoiling the perfection of them by less perfect hours in the future. I have said to myself, John, that I would know the moment to break off this intimacy in time to preserve its memory unstaled by emotion; but I realize now that the only way to do that is to break it at this moment. This night links us for the rest of our lives. The friendship, the intimate intimate friend-

ship now possible, will be marred by no regrets. On one side you have given to me more than I have been able to give you, but if you have a woman for a friend who will be absorbed in your lightest and wildest actions alike, and who will stand aside without the least jealousy from whatever passion or love entralls you in the years to come, you will possess something that few men possess. If in yielding to my own desire I have wronged you, forgive me, John. I have already whispered to you in the darkness my excuses."

He sat on the edge of the bed, dazed by this unexpected epilogue.

"Vanity, beloved boy, makes me want you to be hurt by my ruling that this first time is to be the last time also; but vanity is a miserable emotion beside love, and I would not hurt you, John. You are not hurt, are you?"

"No, I don't think so. Sitting here now I think you're right. But I can't quite answer for what I'll think to-morrow."

At this moment the tune of the trumpeter playing the hour sounded thinly across the silent city. John went across to the open window and leaned out to listen. Eastward it had sounded. Southward it was sounding now. Westward it would sound, and northward. And always with that broken wavering note at the end. He listened, the cool breath of dawn upon his face. For nearly seven hundred years by night and by day, hour after hour, that tune had defied time. Its strength was in the feeble wavering note at the end. Its triumph was its failure.

John turned away from the window and in the glimmer-

ing light which now filled the ugly hotel room he sat down again upon the bed and took Miriam's hand.

"I know you're right. To-night has consecrated a friendship."

He threw himself across her breast, and she held him close for a few moments.

"Kiss me and go," she said. "It is growing light. There will soon be people moving in the hotel. And that we have to think of such people is only one more reason why this night must remain unique."

Her last kiss was still upon his lips when he reached the door and turned to look back at her once again where in the glimmering twilight of dawn she seemed to fold her wings like a white moth with glowing eyes and fade into the pillows.

John's own room when he came back to it gave him a chilly welcome. It was like a friend who has been excluded from a secret. The bed cold and white had an aggressive chastity. It grew light rapidly, and sleep was far away.

Yet to Miriam Stern when John had left her sleep came more softly and more graciously than for many years, and when she woke she found her resolve had set hard. She knew that John could hardly avoid embarrassment at their first meeting, and therefore instead of waiting as she usually did to take her coffee in bed she came down to breakfast with the boys, thus giving him no time in the surprise her early appearance caused to be aware of that first meeting.

Breakfast was hardly finished when a telegram came from Alexander Ogilvie to announce that his eldest son had a brother.

"Lucky fellow!" cried Julius boisterously. "Imagine what Emil would have been like if he had not had me. Well, I vote that, as we've all got up so early, to-day shall be devoted to enquiries into suitable houses for me."

So they took another long drive through the teeming August countryside, to the accompaniment of excited disputes about everything from politics to gardening.

When they arrived back at the hotel there was another telegram from his father to John to say that Elise's condition was causing serious anxiety and asking him to return to England at once.

"So that's the end of Prague and Budapest and Vienna," said John ruefully. "But this must be terrible for my father, poor old chap."

Before John left Cracow that night Miriam took the opportunity of helping with his packing to see him alone for the first time since they had parted at dawn.

"In a way, I am glad you are going, dearest boy, though I pray that when you arrive the need for your going will have passed. I shall write to you to-night or to-morrow. Do not write to me until you receive my letter. Just send a postcard to say you have safely arrived and how you find your stepmother. Now, give me those brushes before you forget them, and look, I'll put your comb here."

"I must ask you one thing . . ." John began.

"Ask me nothing, dearest boy. I am the happiest woman in Europe. And the only thing to make me sad will be bad news from you at home. But I've a feeling all will be well."

So John went northward in a rumbling train, and although he had to sit upright in the second-class carriage

without even a corner seat he slept soundly through the night.

He had expected to go down to Worcestershire, but to his surprise his father met him at the station with the news that Elise was at Church Row.

"Thank God, she did take it into her head to change her plans," Alexander Ogilvie ejaculated. "The nearer to London the better when complications arise on these occasions. We were that much nearer to the medical advice we wanted."

"And how is she?"

"I believe we can fairly say she has turned the corner now. But when I telegraphed to you I felt horribly anxious and . . . well, I suppose I was frightened and wanted you near me, John."

Alexander Ogilvie made this admission with the air of apologizing for the emotional awkwardness he must be inflicting on his son, and John for his part was glad that they were sitting side by side in a hansom so that he had a chance to avoid looking at his father without appearing too careless in his manner of receiving the news.

"I'm very glad you did telegraph."

"It was a pity to interrupt your Austrian visit."

"I had the best of it in Cracow," said John quickly.

The father and son were silent for a while, sitting upright in the cab and staring before them at the comparative sparseness of the traffic in the leisure of the holiday season which was a mark of London at this date.

"The boy is to be called David," Alexander Ogilvie announced.

"Yes, Elise told me he was to be called David. That is if he was a boy. It's a good Ogilvie name."

"He weighed nine pounds."

"Is that a good weight?"

"I believe it's a good average weight. It's curious what strange comparisons strike people. When his grandfather was told the boy's weight he said, 'Hum! Just the weight of a Lee-Metford rifle'. Now, I wouldn't have known the weight of a rifle for one thing, and if I had I don't think I should have related it to an infant. He's a remarkable fellow, Sir William. You ought to get to know him. He's likely to be the next Master of the Rolls."

"I'm not quite sure what that is."

"Principal Judge of the Court of Appeal. Elise is very devoted to her father."

"I know she is."

"And . . . er . . . she's very devoted to you. In fact one of the reasons which decided me to telegraph for you was that I thought she would be glad if you were here."

Another clip-clop silence supervened until it was broken by John this time.

"Who are going to be David's godfathers?"

"Ah, I'm glad you've raised that point. As a matter of fact Elise has expressed a particular desire that you should be one of them and her father the other. I told her I thought it was rather an unusual combination. Incidentally . . . er . . . the . . . er . . . infant . . . David that is to say . . . is to be baptized into the Church of England like yourself. Elise intends to ask her friend Mrs Cregeen to be the boy's godmother."

"I've not met her."

"An agreeable worldly woman with plenty of money."

"I shan't give him a mug," John proclaimed.

"No, I should leave that to Sir William. You can give him a knife, spoon, and fork."

"I shall give him a knife and fork, but it will be with a dirk."

"You're going to make a good Scot of him, eh?"

"I'll do my best," John promised firmly.

"I neglected that part of your education, eh?"

"Well, I think I'll have to be frank and say you did."

"I'm afraid when I look back at it, John, that I neglected most parts of your education. The trouble is that time goes by at such a pace in one's thirties and forties. You'll have been thinking what an age it is since you were a small boy of seven, but to me it is like yesterday. You were grown up before I realized it. And now I suppose David will grow up twice as fast as you did."

John looked over his shoulder and caught his father's eye. Both of them at once gazed straight ahead over the well-groomed dapple-grey horse between the shafts of the hansom, and the clip-clop silence was not interrupted again until the cab reached St John's Wood Road.

"By the way, I haven't told you yet," said the barrister, "that I've been invited to stand as the Liberal candidate for the city of Dunchester. There is not much likelihood of a General Election for some years, so that unless an unforeseen bye-election should crop up I'm unlikely to enter Parliament for some time. The Unionist majority is 1453, but naturally we need not accept the khaki election as the standard. Actually the seat returned a Liberal by a narrow majority in 1895. It is an unusual constituency—an industrialized cathedral city. You must

come down with me some time when I address a meeting of my supporters."

Once again John looked over his shoulder at his father's finely cut, florid countenance. Even in the abandoned London of early September he was as carefully dressed as if he were going to appear in a sensational libel case or in defence of an accused murderer for whom hardly anybody except himself would hope to secure an acquittal. Silk hat: tail coat: red rose-bud for a buttonhole: dark lavender kid gloves: full black satin Ascot tie with a pink pearl pin: sponge bag trousers: patent leather boots: gold-mounted tiger-wood cane. A terrific amount of trouble had been taken to look unmistakably Mr Alexander Ogilvie, K.C.

"Have you thought any more about your own future?" his father asked abruptly.

"I'll see what the effect of Oxford is," John replied.

"You've no fancy for the diplomatic service? You will have just enough of a private income to be fairly comfortable."

"No, I don't think the Civil Service could be gilded in any way to make it palatable for me," said John. "I could not stand a profession which involved waiting to step into the dead men's shoes which had been walking over you all your life. And although I can't claim very much first-hand knowledge of Civil Servants I observed that all the people I most disliked at school made a bee-line for the Civil Service."

"My dear boy," his father protested with some warmth, "you are talking rather wildly. Let me assure you that the British Civil Service is incomparably the

finest expression of government which the world has yet known."

"Yes, but I happen to distrust government in most shapes, and the more efficient it is the more demoralizing it is for the governed."

"You favour anarchy as an alternative?" his father enquired sarcastically.

"Not as an immediate alternative; but I believe that a philosophic anarchy should be the aim of all political thinkers. That is to say I believe individual responsibility should be cultivated and not discouraged as it is by the administrative parasites which flourish in the complicated intestines of contemporary civilization."

"Very pretty rhetoric. But I suppose I'm the last man who should disdain rhetoric, for it has served me well. You are not reconsidering the Bar as a profession?"

"No, I should never have the cynicism which must be required at the beginning. At least, I don't think so. But perhaps it's a little early to assert that. I may change my mind at the Varsity."

"It is possible," his father commented drily.

"But apart from that I think it's a mistake for a son to follow his father's profession if in that profession his father has achieved some eminence. One would be handicapped by trying to avoid the suggestion that one was imitating one's father, and in trying to avoid imitation one might easily sacrifice the vital element of success, because after all it's most improbable that one would possess in oneself enough personality to be independent of one father's contribution to it."

Alexander Ogilvie paused before replying to this unexpected and gratifying admission. He was longing

to ask his son what portion of his character and abilities he considered that he had inherited from himself. He felt if he could once get an answer to this he should have the clue which would enable him to comprehend this baffling product of himself. Yet that uncomfortable paternal dignity still held him back, and at last he took refuge in an embarrassed proposition.

"Family resemblances are rather interesting to work out. I've always thought you took after your mother more than me."

John suddenly divined that the birth of David had filled his father with a sharp curiosity about the measure of his own responsibility for this infant son and that he was longing eagerly for some assurance from his elder son of the important part he had played in his personality to date.

"I think what I've inherited from you," said John, coming straight to the point in a way that brought back Athene Pendarves to her husband more vividly than John dreamed he was doing, "is a whole set of ancestral ambitions and obligations and sentiments and opinions which were stifled by the accursed Scots doctrine of two hundred years that material prosperity was the chief end of man and that the achievement of such material prosperity was the outward sign of God's favour. I think that Scotsmen have been obsessed by the conception of God as a bad-tempered old gentleman with a soft spot for Scotsmen whom, thanks to their canny appreciation of His whims, he enjoys rewarding with large peppermint bull's-eyes, His own red-headed boys, in fact. Sorry," John said to his father's snort of displeasure, "I didn't mean to get off the point. Seriously,

though, I do think that there must have been a lot of convictions which were smothered like the little princes in the Tower by that Richard Crookback the main chance. There was a faint stir under the pillows when you wanted me to go to Fettes or Loretto, but it was a very faint stir, and anyway you probably reminded yourself rightly that Fettes and Loretto are only attempts to make Winchester and Marlborough grow in Scotland, just extra prickly varieties of the English rose but not authentic thistles. Still, I suppose I should be right in assuming that you have never seriously considered you were smothering anything. I don't think you can have, or you wouldn't be proposing to contest an English cathedral city at the next election."

"You are right. I regard Scotland as part of a much greater whole, and I am grateful for a happy political arrangement which allowed Scotland a freedom of development unimaginable before the Union of the two countries."

"Well, we mustn't start arguing about that," said John, "or we shall get right off the point. But I must have inherited this very definite point of view about Scotland from your blood, though I'll agree that the Cornish half of me has been a sympathetic recipient of that point of view. I have no doubt that fundamentally the Cornish are also subconsciously aware that somehow they have been pushed out of things and that the controlling influence of the country to which they are attached is not an influence which represents their basic attitude toward life. And then my French grandmother may have supplied the breath which blew these smouldering beliefs into the semblance of a small flicker."

"I don't know that I can follow your fancies, John.

I consider all these supposed racial influences highly problematical."

"But if you refuse to admit them, why admit the influence of heredity in anything? Why then look in me for any characteristics of yourself? If there can be transmission of a trick of the eyelid or a turn of the head, there can surely be transmission of the mental attitude which first engendered them, and if of that mental attitude, why not of the mental attitude developed by inbreeding over hundreds of years, which is more likely to be temporarily suppressed than permanently destroyed by a comparatively few years of miscegenation?"

"You have a most fluent vocabulary, John."

"Ah, I dare say I got *that* from you."

"Yes, I dare say you did," the barrister agreed with a touch of complacency.

"And now will you tell me something, father? What makes you prefer to defend an apparently hopeless case? It surely isn't entirely for the sake of the popular applause? And it certainly isn't for the material

"Indeed no," Alexander Ogilvie assented fervidly. "A man pays much less to escape from the gallows than from a tiresome wife or a broken contract, which of course is what we should expect under our super-excellent legal system."

"Then isn't your enjoyment in undertaking these apparently hopeless cases a secret pleasure in getting the better of this super-excellent legal system? And mightn't the hidden prompting of that impulse come from a form of national self-assertion?"

"Too subtle, too subtle altogether," the barrister

decided. Then he suddenly put an arm up and lifted the trap in the roof.

"Don't drive this admirable animal of yours quite so hard up this hill, cabby. We are not in such a hurry as all that."

"No, sir, thank you, sir."

The cabman reined in the smart grey to a walk for this steep part of Fitzjohn's Avenue. Presently John noticed that the hansom was passing Claremont Gardens. For a moment his mind was back in Cracow, and he did not continue his eager argument.

"And yet perhaps there may be something in it," his father was saying reflectively. "It's certainly an ingenious point. Perhaps in a year or two you'll think more kindly of the Bar."

John shook his head.

"I'm afraid I shan't. My trouble would be that I wouldn't accept any brief which wasn't for the defence. And so I should moulder away of inanition in my chambers. We shall be at Church Row very soon now. I'm longing to see this brother of mine."

"Well, you can't make much of him at present," the father warned his elder son. "The nurse indeed professed to detect a likeness to myself, but I fancy that is the usual amiable sycophancy indulged in by these peripatetic Lucinas known as monthly nurses. My personal opinion is that David looks remarkably like every other recently born infant I have seen."

Church Row was still as an old coloured print in the sunlight of that September day. The trees in the middle of the road were motionless with summer's heavy green; but the flowers in the window-boxes were withering for want of water in those houses with drawn blinds whose residents had not come back to town from their holidays, and their faded lobelias and calceolarias, their parched geraniums and marguerites gave a premature autumnal suggestion to the atmosphere. In the brief minute during which the hansom drove along that mellow Georgian promenade John had a sudden prevision of his infant brother's long childhood in Hampstead, saw him holding tight to his nurse's skirt as they entered that mysterious narrow lane which led down to Frognal, saw him shuffling through the dead November leaves strewn thick in Holly Place, saw him hurrying excitedly along up Heath Street to sail his boat on one of the ponds, saw him by his nursery window gazing down across the tree-tops upon the glittering haze over London . . . and then the heavy front door closed behind his father and himself to shut out the sound of the hansom's swing round and of the hooves of the dapple-grey walking sedately away down the empty sunny street.

"How's your mistress, Watson?"

"Very comfortable now, sir, and anxious to know when Mr John was arriving and would like to see him at once."

"Don't you think I'd better change first, father? I'm pretty grubby for a sick room after my journey."

"Yes, you go and have a bath and come along presently. I'll go up to her now. I'm in the spare room, by the way."

Alexander Ogilvie had already left his wife's room when his elder son tapped at the dressing-room door. He had not felt capable of standing the strain of inspecting his infant son in the presence of John.

Nurse Rankin, a plump dark little woman, came forward to usher him in.

"She's much better. Ever so much better. We were really very worried three days ago, but all is going smoothly now. Mrs Ogilvie?"

"Come in."

John passed through into the bedroom which had that strange hushed mystery shed by the presence of a newly born child, combined with that faintly medicated atmosphere of the professional sick-room.

"Dear John, I am so glad to see you," said Elise, putting a hand over the coverlet to greet him. He leant over and kissed her pale cheek.

"I am so sorry you've had such a rotten time."

"I'm so sorry that you were fetched all the way back from Cracow. I feel a guilty wretch. And look at the cause of it."

She lifted the edge of a finely woven woollen shawl and showed the sleeping infant.

"Isn't he a splendid little fellow?" exclaimed the nurse, in that tone with which monthly nurses manage to suggest an exceptionally definite personality for their latest achievement.

John consoled himself for an inability to contribute any striking comment on his minute half-brother with a reflection that nobody except a monthly nurse ever did contribute any striking comment. Of a kitten one could say it promised to be a well-marked tabby. Of a peach

or a pear one could observe with what skill the moment for gathering it had been chosen.

"He seems very quiet."

It was not a brilliant remark, but it was the best he could manage.

"As quiet as an angel," the nurse agreed enthusiastically. "Though, mind you, his lordship can make himself heard when he wants anything. Yes, indeed he can, the rascal."

With this she retired into the dressing-room and after closing the door between was faintly heard making those busy tinkling little noises associated with the presence of a nurse in the house.

"Pull up that chair to the side of the bed and tell me about your Cracow experiences."

John launched forth on a severe indictment of the monstrous partitions of Poland and declared his conviction that Europe would not be Europe until Poland was united and free again.

"Their position is not quite so bad in Austrian Poland as it is under the Prussians and the Russians, but it's bad enough. It's the Ireland of Eastern Europe, and the Poles have the same magnificent consciousness of their national status as the Irish. They're waiting for a European war to recreate Poland, and of course the Irish are waiting for that too. There was a splendid fellow called Pilsudski who's coming to London this autumn. I didn't meet him, but some of the young revolutionaries were talking about him at a musical party we went to. It was rather wonderful. Songs and recitations and plenty of Chopin in his most martial moods. I got very much worked up. Nobody, however, seemed to think there

was a chance of a successful rising under present conditions. The three black eagles would be too much for the white eagle. It would be the same in Ireland now. Not even a Garibaldi could do anything against modern methods of warfare. But when Francis Joseph dies, that will be the time. There's bound to be a war between Austria and Russia, and that will be Poland's opportunity."

"John, John, don't talk in that bloodthirsty way about war, with this sleeping infant's future already tormenting my imagination. I seem to have chosen a most bellicose pair of godfathers. Alec told you what my father said about David's weight being the same as some rifle or other? And now here are you talking about Armageddon as if it were a cricket match. Did you do nothing else in Poland except discuss revolution? How is Mrs Stern?"

"She's quite fit."

"I must get to know her better when she comes back to London this autumn. I've always reproached myself for that silly remark I made to you about her that day we went to the Ibsen matinée. And now tell me about Rose. When is she coming back from Switzerland?"

"She's back."

"Oh, then I feel a little less guilty over spoiling your Polish visit."

"Well, as a matter of fact she's going to marry a man called Henry Falconer some time this autumn."

"John!"

"Oh, I've got over it now. You see, there was a hopeless row about her going to that dance with me in May. I didn't tell you about it at the time because I didn't want to be pitied. But that was the reason she went to Switzerland, and she got engaged there to this chap

Falconer. He is a brother officer of mine. An awfully decent fellow. Actually it is the right marriage for Rose. She'll be Lady Warburton one day. And of course plenty of money. I think they're having rather a job to keep up Medlicott. I see now how absurd it was for me to expect her people would take me seriously."

"All the same, I can't help feeling a sentimental regret. It could have been a lovely idyll. And when one is so happy oneself one enjoys the happiness of other people. Dear John, and I am so very happy."

"You've given everybody a jolly good fright. I think it has shaken father up a bit."

"I was very anxious to see you myself, John, in case anything was going to happen to me, because I wanted to tell you how much I relied on you to help David in the future. But your father was just as anxious for you to be here as I was. You know, he's very touching. Such a child in many ways. He's still frightened of you. Of course it will be different with David, because by the time David is your age Alec will be getting on for seventy and he'll have all the self-confidence of a grandfather. I expect the struggle will be between David and me."

She turned her head to look at the sleeping infant beside her.

"It's foolish and egotistical to suppose that any particular importance attaches itself to this child of mine for the same importance is attached to every child who is born. But I can't help wondering what lies before this child born in the first year of the new century. John, what a responsibility it is, what a fearful responsibility! Deliberately to bring into the world a human creature

and expose it to all the misery and pain and fret of life. I ask myself now how I ever dared to do it."

"David will have a much better chance than a lot of kids."

"I know he will, John. But I kept thinking of you and of the way you lost your mother when you were a little boy. There was a moment when after the agony of it all I felt myself slipping away from life and when my will bade me go, and it was the sudden thought of you left to yourself when you were so small which roused me to the wrong I was doing, and it was then I began to struggle to live. How strange that I am able to talk to you so easily about myself. John, you will help David, won't you? In a way you'll be more like his father than Alec who will be the fond grandpapa."

"Yes, I dare say he will be."

"He most certainly will be. All the severity and the discipline will have to come from you and me. I know Alec thinks he failed dismally with you, and that will make him more determined than ever to spoil David."

They went on talking for a while longer about trivial topics until the nurse came in.

"I think that's a long enough visit for the present, Mrs Ogilvie. It's really time you took your rest now."

John leaned over Elise and as he kissed her cheek he whispered an assurance of his devotion to her and David.

"Elise is very fond of you. Your coming back has done her a great deal of good," Alexander Ogilvie told his son that evening when Watson had withdrawn from the dining-room and left them to the filberts and the wine.

"I'm very fond of *her*," John replied.

"We shall have the christening in about three weeks. I was wondering if you would care to go back to your friends for say another fortnight? It doesn't seem quite fair to keep you in London at this rather dull time of the year."

"Oh, I shall be quite happy. In fact I rather like London when it's empty and quiet. I'm near enough to being at school to get a holiday thrill out of it. Beside, I want to get various things for Oxford."

It was in this mood of gloating over freedom from school that on the next day John rode over to Kensington and sat by himself on the verandah of the deserted cricket pavilion to contemplate the great green expanse of the playing-fields across which not even a solitary gardener moved, and the great crimson bulk of the school buildings, the untenanted air of which made that old bogey of a gilded clockface appear so bland and benevolent. The goal-posts on big side and middle side and little side had already been put up in preparation for the Michaelmas term. The scoring-board had been pushed into a corner, the figures of the last innings recorded at the end of July all that was left of the school cricket of 1901. Friends of his would have contributed to that total, and the score of the last man out would certainly have been the score of somebody familiar to him for many years of that intimate association of school which as soon as it was broken seemed like some incredible pre-existence in another world. Yes, the goal-posts were already up, and within less than three weeks some of the new boys would be playing their first game on little side under the eyes of Kirkham hoping to spot a future Varsity blue. Most of them would be pushed into the scrum at first.

'Keep your bottoms down there and shove hard, you little blighters.' And most of them would remain in the scrum for the rest of their schooldays. To play half or three-quarter in one's first year was usually a triumph of looks and personality rather than a recognition of skill.

Would David be coming here as a new boy in September 1912 or 1913? Would he himself twelve years hence look back at school through the enchantment of distance and urge that St James's was the best place for his young half-brother? Well, if David was doomed to go to a public school, perhaps a day school would be less of a purgatory than a boarding school. But David might enjoy school. David might be born to flourish at a public school. When he went up to Oxford he would make a careful comparative study of the types produced by the various public schools. And on that study his advice over David's education should be based. However, if David showed signs of being the kind of boy who did not flourish at his best in a public school he should find in his elder brother one who would fight hard to save him from the dreary experience. After all, people could not turn round and tell him that he was no judge because his own school life had been so miserable. It had *not* been miserable. It had been superficially most agreeable. He could fairly claim fifteen months after he had left it that he had been one of the most popular figures at St James's. And that popularity had if anything added to the boredom of it. Acute unhappiness would in some respects have been preferable. If he had been bullied or ragged or shunned he would have had a grievance against life, and that might have made a good revolutionary of him. As it was, in theory he was a revolutionary, but

he had such an amount of amiable tolerance for everybody and such a propensity for positively liking nearly everybody that even if he was given the chance of revolutionary activity he should always find it most difficult to bring himself to the point of putting a number of negatively harmless people even to inconvenience. People were all comic or pathetic or lovable. Could he think of anybody whom he hated or whom he ever had hated? John shook his head. He did not hate even Dick Medlicott. Temporary exasperation was the most violent hostile emotion with which any individual had inspired him. He could choke with rage over the behaviour of the Prussians in 1870, or even over the partition of Poland a century earlier. He could contemplate obliterating Turkey from the map of the world. The English treatment of Ireland turned the pages of history to scarlet before his eyes. The blood of the Jacobites was warm as in the days when it flowed. Elizabeth he would have rejoiced to see slowly burnt alive after being racked first. He could not imagine that if he had lived in the days when active revolt against his historical enemies was possible he would not have plotted against them and fought against them with those others who had plotted and fought. Yet if he were to meet a bestial harridan like Elizabeth in a modern omnibus he would probably offer her his seat, which would be as ignominious as Raleigh's contemptible gesture with his cloak.

And if he could not achieve hot hate how was he going to achieve the cold hate a successful revolutionary must have for the opponents who fought against his destruction and impeded his reconstruction? It was believed that only they who could hate were able to love. Was he going

through life with a perpetually amiable regard for everybody, but no capacity to lose the world for love? He had surrendered weakly over Rose. He should have defied Mrs Medlicott and searched Switzerland until he found her. He had actually blamed Rose for her own willingness to bow before parental demands, but had he not himself bent an equally lowly head? Could he be allowed to have been really in love with a girl if he was prepared to recognize in the man she had chosen in preference to himself not merely a good fellow but a more suitable husband for Rose? Did it not expose the whole of his emotional state to a grave suspicion of superficiality? Yet would a woman like Mrs Stern . . . but he must not think of her now as Mrs Stern. That instead of thinking of her as Miriam he had thought of her as Mrs Stern might be another indication of this suspected superficiality. Had he been deeply enough moved by the tribute she had paid his raw personality? Yet would a woman like Miriam have found in him anything to love if he were as superficial as he was fearing? To be sure, the phenomenon of a woman like her falling in love with a boy young enough to be her son was well known, but nobody could accuse Miriam Stern of being an empty-headed, vain or stupid woman. Moreover, she had shown that she treasured their intimacy too deeply to let it be destroyed in the end by yielding to what would be called self-indulgence. She had demonstrated her belief in his own ability to live up to the standard of that intimacy.

Yes, it did look as if life had been too easy for him to feel the profounder emotions. He was glad in one way that he was not jealous or envious or resentful of superiority

or even personally ambitious for power, but there was no doubt that if he were he would find it much easier to translate dreams into action. Still perhaps he had not yet been tested sufficiently by circumstance. After all he would not be nineteen for another month, and when he remembered his contemporaries at St James's he had a right to feel that although fortune had given him the opportunity to delve into experience more deeply and venture farther than the rest of them, he had still great tracts of unexplained life before him. A wider experience, and this tendency toward an amiable tolerance might correct itself. At least he had never succumbed to an amiable tolerance of school itself. In spite of being liked by most ushers and most boys, in spite of being envied by most of his fellows for the ease with which he passed through the trials of a schoolboy's existence, and in spite of being left at the end of his schooldays without a single remembrance of a wrong or an injustice to himself, he had hated the abstract idea of school from the first moment to the last of that penal servitude. A convict could hardly hate his prison more savagely. To look now at those innumerable windows in that hideous gothic muddle of red brick was to feel a deep pity for the slaves who had to endure even as long as another day of its engulfing ennui. Yes, if that infant up at Hampstead did not by the time he was eight years old display an indecent taste for being enslaved, he would fight for him to be given an imaginative education. What really was it which had made him hate school so much? Perhaps it was the deliberate process of standardization for which it stood. It set out either directly by the precepts of authority or indirectly by the example of those under

that authority to discourage the slightest sign of the individual's attempting to differentiate himself. Everybody must think that the end of a boy's ambition is to obtain a place in the Fifteen or the Eleven, or to win races or boxing matches or gymnastic competitions. Authority might excuse a boy from achieving this ambition if he showed by his intelligence and his application that he was likely to gain a scholarship at Oxford or Cambridge, not because such a scholarship would help him to live his own life, but because it would redound to the glory of the school and provide the first rung in that dreary ladder to a post in the Civil Service. The brains of the English public schools were being developed to create a parasitic class the utility and efficiency of which could not hide the fact that they were parasites, skilfully though that condition might be disguised.

John smiled to himself. He was remembering an essay set by Askew on that biting phrase of Tacitus, *corruptissima republica plurimae leges*. In the previous week more than half the members of the Lower Sixth had revealed in a questionnaire upon the aims and objects of their education that their ambition was to become members of the Civil Service. So he had supported Tacitus in his own essay on the proposition that numerous laws were the sign of a state's decay and had founded his arguments upon the increasing interference of the Government with the citizen and the creation thereby of a class of men employed to put into effect unnecessary laws which must ultimately destroy the state by bringing into existence more people to make laws than there were citizens to obey them. Askew had enjoyed reading one passage of this essay in which Civil Servants had been

likened to worms preying upon the intestines of the state, and had asked the members of the Lower Sixth bound for the Civil Service whether Ogilvie's comparison appealed to their own notion of themselves. John laughed aloud in the empty pavilion at the recollection of those absurd indignant faces looking up from their scrabbled desks at the impudent jester who mocked at their sacred belief in their own potential utility to mankind and jeered at their longing for the security of the pension which would reward that utility! 'Cry havoc, and let slip the dogs of law!' In another few years those earnest swots in the Lower Sixth would be ascribing as much importance to their printed forms as once they had ascribed to the notes of Monroe's *Homeric Grammar*. Yet although one might laugh at them they were as much of a menace to the health of the nation as the damned lawyers they were beginning to oust from their dominium of three centuries. To this had Merry England sunk—to be a breeding-ground for lawyers and Civil Servants, for shopkeepers and cynical journalists.

Emil was right. The future vigour of the nation was in the keeping of the *plebs*. The *bourgeoisie* was exhausted, and its final effort in the system of popular education it had devised would be to turn the *plebs* into a *bourgeoisie*. For the moment they were grumbling at the uppishness of the working classes which was being brought about by this board-school education. There were jokes in *Punch* about servants who asked if they might practise on the pianos of their mistresses. That kind of feeble snobbery was rampant. But in their hearts they were grateful for this civilizing process which would stave off for ever in England anything like the French Revolution.

The sneering at this education arose from an instinct to make it appear desirable and precious to those who were to be tamed by it. If the *bourgeoisie* as Emil called them after reading this fellow Marx, at whom he must really have a go himself, had any real vigour in themselves they would have devised a new education for their own young at the same time as imposing upon the young of the *plebs* this genteel veneer designed to keep them dutiful slaves with an illusion of being better off than their fathers.

Yet beyond revising a Latin Primer which had been in use for over a century no change had been made in the education of a century. It was not that a so-called classical education was bad as such: it was the wretched use these damned follow-my-leaders made of their opportunities. The literature of Greece and Rome was turned into a device for extracting a system of marks for competitive examinations. The history of the four clearly defined nations which made up the geographical entity known as the British Isles was doled out for a couple of hours a week from some biassed little volume written to glorify the infallibility, impeccability and invulnerability of the England which had tried to absorb the other three. This tendentious presentation of history roused a vague hostility in all who could not claim to be purely English, and that meant at least half the boys in a great London school like St James's, whereas the object of teaching history should be to present the truth, were it never so unpalatable, because it was imperfection not perfection which inspired love. And the literature of England which was her unassailable glory was defiled term after term by preposterous annotated

editions of Pope's *Epistles* or Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* in which an accurate knowledge of the notes was esteemed far above the appreciation of the subject. As well exalt the droppings of a nightingale above its song. Add to this curriculum a little French, a little mathematics, an hour a week of the Greek Testament, half an hour with the Kings of Judah and Israel, and, until the security of the Sixth was attained, an hour and a half of what was called drawing, presided over by three barbarians in a chaos of plaster casts and hideous studies of still life, which gave sixteen boys out of twenty a hatred of art for the rest of their lives. Such was a classical education, the cultural background of a code of behaviour in which the most important features were to think, act, speak, look, eat, work and play like your fellows. That it served well for the majority was not a valid argument in its favour. The paralysing effect on the minority at a period when, if one could judge by the South African war, the crisis of the British Empire was at hand was too grave a fault.

The gilded face of the clock stared blandly and benevolently across the empty stretch of green sward, mocking John's resentment against the education of which it far more than the Headmaster was the real president. It beamed with the complacency of ordered time. Half-past nine till one for classics, twenty to two until twenty to three for football or cricket, three to five for the hotchpotch of history, French, mathematics and English literature. Beaming day in day out through the terms moving with intolerable slowness, day in day out through the holidays moving with intolerable speed.

"Well, if I can save that infant brother of mine from your butterfaced tyranny, I will," John said aloud to the

clock. "I was bound to your tyranny without being consulted. My friend Emil uses you for his own cool purpose. But you missed Julius, and you shan't have David."

It was twenty minutes to four. The benevolent expression had left the face of the clock. The hands were now set in a glum droop. In another three weeks it would have nearly seven hundred boys safely imprisoned at this hour, seven hundred captives unable to congratulate themselves that even half the weary afternoon had passed. And perhaps some wretched group in one of the sunless classrooms on the other side of the school would have learnt for repetition and be mumbling above the rumble of the omnibuses along the Hammersmith Road:

"Two Voices are there: one is of the sea,
One of the mountains; each a mighty Voice,
In both from age to age thou didst rejoice,
They were thy chosen music, Liberty!"

John left the cricket pavilion and wheeled his bicycle to the entrance of the school grounds. He had suddenly decided to go round to Gladwyn Road and see if by any chance the Fenwicks were at home. On his way he passed one or two small Jacobeans whom he only recognized as such by their school caps. They were no doubt new boys of last year to whom he would not be even a name. Poor little brutes, they had at least five years of their sentence still to serve.

The grey portico above the Fenwicks' front door seemed as remote in time from his own experience as the

columns of a ruined temple. Yet while after ringing the bell he waited for the door to open he found he could recall the pattern and colours of the stained glass in the upper panel from the faint indications of it which appeared on the outside. He could see through by the help of his memory to the hall within, that hall which a mere eighteen months ago had seemed fraught with his destiny. He was on the point of ringing again when a voice hailed him from the area.

"The family's away," it proclaimed.

John looked down to see a large rubicund woman, no doubt the caretaker.

"When will they be back?"

"Not for another month yet."

"I'll leave a card."

"What was you selling then?"

"I'm not selling anything."

John scribbled '*sorry to have missed you*' on his card, and handed it down through the railings to the rubicund woman who looked at the small oblong of cardboard most suspiciously.

"What do you expect me to do with this 'ere?" she asked finally.

"I should leave it on the table in the front hall."

She rubbed her squab nose with the palm of her hand in a gesture which evidently implied considerable uncertainty as to the advisableness of such a course.

"Well," she sniffed, "if ever I was to happen to trail upstairs for anythink I'll try and remember to leave it on the hall table. But I don't take no responsibility, mind. I'm just acting caretaker. I'm not supposed to take nothink to do with nothink else."

"Do you know where the family is?"

"Yes, I know where they *is*, but that doesn't say I'm going to tell *you* where they *is*, young man, does it?"

John made up his mind not to press her for the information. By calling he had shown his desire to see the Fenwicks again. Perhaps one of them would find his card and write to him. Hetty had once foretold that he would pass out of their lives. Well, he had called upon them. They might find his card, and if they did not find it, perhaps that would be the easiest way. So much had happened since he was a familiar figure in this house, and friendships with great gaps between the friends were unsatisfactory affairs. It might be a superficial way of looking at it, but already it began to appear as if friendship depended for its endurance upon continuity of association.

And with this thought occurring to him as he mounted his bicycle John resolved to let nothing undone by him expose his friendship with Edward Fitzgerald to the peril of desuetude. He would call now at Fitz's house. Fitz himself was unlikely to be at home, but the doctor or his wife might be there. In Trelawny Road he was told that Mrs Fitzgerald was in.

"Why now, Ogilvie, isn't this a very great pleasure! But it's not Ogilvie I ought to be calling you," Fitz's mother corrected herself quickly, "and you'll be good enough to excuse me, Mr Ogilvie."

As she looked at him John's fancy was struck by a sense of her remoteness from this commonplace room. She appeared as completely out of place here as a Giotto angel in a Luke Fildes interior. Her pale blue eyes sought an eternity which her faded anxious hands strove to shut out for the sake of present duty, and her gentle

voice was impersonal like a distant echo, so that when she asked him where he had been all this long time he felt that he had returned to this house after many years of absence.

"I'm just back from Poland, and I thought I must come and see you after such a long time."

"That's a good Catholic country, I believe. And it's you that has come at the right moment. We're expecting Edward back this afternoon. He's been over in Ireland for three weeks. Come along, and we'll be getting the tea ready."

"How's the doctor?"

"The doctor is in grand shape. He's away out on his rounds just now, but he should be in soon."

"And Ellen?"

Mrs Fitzgerald shook a distressed head.

"Ellen is away on this acting of hers. I don't like it at all, Ogilvie. But she set her heart on it, and there was no checking her. No, no, she was just set on it. But where she took the notion I don't know at all. It was surely not from her parents. She's in Eastbourne this week. Edward had some friends to see in Liverpool or he should have been back by now."

Mrs Fitzgerald looked anxiously at the clock. John divined that she looked anxiously at the clock all the time her son was away from London. They had been sitting over tea for about five minutes when Fitz himself came in. His thin face was sunburnt, and his pale blue eyes lighted up at the sight of John.

"The Judge, begod! Well, I've had a great time, mother. I tramped the length and breadth of Kerry and Clare, and have learnt more Irish than I ever managed,

before. The celebration of the centenary of '98 three years back has had a great influence. There's something stirring. Oh, I've had a great time. Our tenant at Tinoran was very decent and gave me a couple of days' fishing up Glencar. And I had one day with the grouse. Well, well, Judge boy, it's good to see you again."

Presently the doctor came in, and the tale of Edward's wanderings in Munster had to be told in greater detail, for he was anxious to know how every familiar place had appeared, his soft voice taking on an added tenderness with every question as if he were at the bedside of a sick child. After tea he went off to the surgery, and Fitz carried John away to his own small room at the end of the front hall.

"I'm glad you came this afternoon, Judge," he said. "Do you remember in the spring of last year that debate on Home Rule after the Union tea?"

"Very well."

"Do you remember that we walked back to my place after it, and that I told you a sacrifice of blood was necessary to give Ireland life again?"

"I shall never forget it," and as if it were yesterday John was walking with his friend through the acrid foggy air of that March evening and seeing the fanatical expression on his gaunt face, and the wide eloquent mouth so vivid a red even by the sickly glow of the incandescent gaslamp.

"And I told you that I was not sure how the sacrifice of blood would be offered?"

John nodded gravely.

"The vision came to me on the night of the Assumption."

"Of the Assumption?" John repeated in surprise.

He was thinking of that aspiring red brick church in the market-place of Cracow and hearing the echo of that broken trumpet tune.

"Yes, I had walked from Dingle to Tralee and was feeling pretty fagged out. I had climbed Mount Brandon the previous day. The bed I was given in the small hotel was lumpy as hell, and in spite of being so cursed tired I couldn't sleep. So I set out to amuse myself by planning out the kind of country a free Ireland might be. I had restored the language, distributed the land, protected the fisheries, expropriated the absentee landlords, and was just assisting at a grand and glorious ceremony at which the elected representatives of the Irish Republic were proclaiming a sovereign nation's withdrawal from the British Empire when I felt as if something had struck me a hell of a blow over the heart, and before I knew where I was I had landed as it seemed to me head over heels on the floor. I suppose if I'd been asked as a medical student what had happened I should have guessed an attack of pseudo-angina brought on by exertion. But it isn't so easy to find a rational explanation for the sequel. Sitting on the floor of that hotel bedroom, and feeling a bit of a damn fool with my head in a whirl, I looked up over the mantelpiece and saw that the solid wall had turned to a kind of mist which gradually developed into a view of a patch of country I had particularly noticed during my tramp from Dingle to Tralee earlier in the day. You know the way you'll see the view outside thrown on the table of a camera obscura?"

John nodded.

"Well, it was like that. But by the side of a bohereen there was a small heap of stones with a white cross stuck in to the top of them. And while I was staring at my grave beside the road, for I knew somehow that it was my grave, the Kerry country and the bohereen and the white cross on the heap of stones faded from the wall and in their place I read in blood-red letters *Pray for the soul of Edward Fitzgerald I.R.A. who died in defence of Ireland*, but when I tried to read the date I could not read it, for though it was inscribed all right and I could read the R.I.P. after it, the figures themselves were an illegible blur. And then the words faded out and I vomited on the floor like a dog. Judge, that was an assurance that the sacrifice of blood will be asked and that it will be offered and that it will be accepted. But when, when? And the date was there, Judge. It was there if I could only have read the blasted figures."

"What would I.R.A. mean?"

"Irish Republican Army. The Fenians started that forty years ago. And the I.R.A. is not yet dead. After sitting on the top of Mount Brandon the day before and looking over Kerry and the ocean I had prayed by St Brandon's holy well for the salvation of Ireland; but I never felt so far away from any answer to a prayer of mine. The ocean went on winking lazily below, togged out in silver like a fat lazy whore winking at me from a sofa. The mountains and the bogs of Kerry dreamed on in the warmth of summer. It was the peacefullest country under the sun. But Ireland will not be saved by peace. No, and Ireland will not be saved by a mob of Hibernian playboys yelling together in the British House of Commons. No, begod, nor by

Nationalist conventions in Chicago and New York. Nor by obstruction of a lot of la-di-da Tories in Parliament. And Ireland will not be saved by a bevy of draggle-tailed women with haystacks of hair, stringing away at a harp and warbling about Deirdre and Grania. And refusal to pay rent will not save Ireland. Nor boycott nor cattle-driving. Dynamite will not do it any more than moaning about Dark Rosaleen over a bottle of Johnnie Jameson. A deliberate sacrifice must be offered. Life must come through death. And on the top of Mount Brandon I prayed to be allowed to offer that sacrifice to which the answer at the moment seemed a sleepy peace of land and sea. It was in Tralee the answer came that night. But when, Judge, when will it be? The date was a blur. Never mind, the date was written even if I could not read it and therefore I can be sure that this death will come in a way and on a day which will feed the life of Ireland. But not a word of this to anybody, Judge. I don't want my mother to fret herself sick over my bloodstained future. And I don't want to be exasperated by advice from her pet priests. Perhaps she'll be gone before my hour comes to me. Judge, you'd never understand in a hundred years of telling how happy I feel since that night in Tralee. And I vowed next day at Mass that on every feast of Our Blessed Lady I would make my communion and ask her intercession to let this sacrifice be consummated."

Fitz's eyes were blazing. John looked at him enviously.

"I wish I had so clear a vision of the future as you have had," he said. Then after a moment or two of hesitation he related to Fitz his own experience while he was sitting

in the church of St Mary at Cracow, spellbound by the living glory of Veit Stoss's triptych.

"Will I interpret, Judge?"

"Yes, if you can find an interpretation."

"I'd say it was the grace of God. But you'll have to find out for yourself the way to take advantage of that grace. It would be easy enough to recognize a call to be received into the Church; but if you'll let me give you a bit of advice, Judge, I wouldn't be in too much of a hurry to become a Catholic. I've noted one or two of these conversions about your age, and they're too emotional. They're apt to froth away like the head on a glass of Guinness. I don't think it's much use in these days to seek salvation in a spasm of vague emotion. You want to test your reason and your history before you take a plunge like that. My religion is as much a part of me as the hair on my head; but when you've got to put it on like a wig you want to be pretty certain that it isn't going to blow off with the next change of wind."

"But perhaps it's the lack of a stronghold of the mind like the Catholic Church which keeps me wandering about in this wide open country where in whatever direction I walk the view is equally charming and the horizon equally distant. If I were an Irishman and a Catholic like you, Fitz, I believe I should have the fixity of purpose you have. But you have in your country and your Church a double assurance that whatever you do for or believe of both must be an act of virtue. The people of Ireland wish to sever themselves from any connection with England. They may not have reached a conclusion yet how that severance is to be brought about, but in the hearts of the great majority of Irishmen the

wish to be themselves does exist and the will to be themselves can be roused. You are only one of many Irish-men who have dedicated themselves to the rousing of this will. Beyond that, you have in your religion an assurance of the truth and therefore a conviction that the freedom of your country must be for that country's good. The Poles are in the same position. I heard of a man in Poland called Pilsudski who says that two machine guns are worth a cartload of books for a country which is not free. You couldn't say that without an assurance that you held the truth. And I think the fundamental cause for the English misunderstanding of the Irish is what to them seems this reckless violence. They lack a creed which assures them so practically and so positively as Catholicism that this life on earth is a preparation for eternity. Therefore they are not prepared to do anything which will ensure that preparation's being helped. I'm in that position myself. I can't believe that personal immortality is true and simultaneously I can't believe that it is not true. So I push the question aside and begin to speculate how life on earth can be made as comfortable as possible for everybody in case it should be the only life there is. I am sure that if one sought a reason for this growing preoccupation of Western man with humanitarianism it is the growing doubt of there being any existence except the life we live upon this earth."

"You'll have to turn socialist, Judge."

"You say that contemptuously."

"Not at all."

"Anyway, we can't go on very much longer as we are. Damn it, we're not Victorians. My stepmother has just produced an infant son, and I'll see that he does not

imbibe any of the poisons of that tainted epoch. How are you getting on at the hospital?"

"You handed that back very neatly, Judge."

"What?"

"My socialist gibe. But thank God, I've found that by staying in London I can help Ireland, and so I'm not feeling so bitter at the idea of being a general practitioner in Trelawny Road. And my hour will come. But that's a secret, Judge. I've told nobody else except you. So don't treat me as the yeoman captain treated the croppy boy."

"I shall probably resign my commission when I go up to Oxford. You'll have to come up and see me there."

"And you'll have to come with me to Kerry and Clare next summer, and we'll find that place where one day there'll be a cross to my memory."

"Yes, I will. Don't let's drift apart, Fitz. I hadn't realized how easy it is to drift apart."

"Come on, Judge, we'll go round the corner and have one. When a man talks about drifting apart, a Guinness is called for."

So they went off to the Pines Hotel and had one.

The next day John received a long letter from Miriam Stern:

*Poste Restante,
Lemberg,
Sept. 1, 1901.*

My dearest John,

Emil and Julius have just gone out to find out about our journey to Lemberg, where we are proposing to go to-morrow in order to make it a centre from which

to set out on our preliminary search for Julius's house. I hope my maternal fondness is not making me behave like a lunatic. However, I'm glad to say that Emil has been converted to the plan, and that consoles me because Emil does seem to me—more maternal fondness—extraordinarily wise. And his comprehension of me is devastating. It was the awareness of that more than anything which gave me the strength, if not to resist entirely this wonderful experience, at any rate to prevent its complete mastery over my present and future.

And it has been a wonderful experience for me, John. Perhaps, when you held me in your arms throughout that night at summer's end, that season so meet a season for her whom you held, you thought you were able to understand a little of what it was meaning to me, but it was all far more perfect than you at your age could dream. I shall wear that night, beloved boy, like a sapphire upon my heart. And now before I let my pen drop upon the paper and sit dreaming like a schoolgirl let me force myself to write that I hope you did not have too uncomfortable a journey and that you slept in the train and that the crossing was kind and smooth. And I hope too that your charming stepmother continues to get better. It was good of you to think of telegraphing to me when you arrived that you had found things at home less serious than you had feared. I wonder what you are feeling like with a brother nineteen years younger than yourself. It's a solemn and admonishing thought for me that when this infant is your age I shall be verging upon sixty and that you will be almost the same sedate age as I am now. But you will not be feeling then that to fall in love with a girl twenty years younger than yourself is a piece of

folly—at any rate in the eyes of the world. When you were the size of this brother of yours and I was an unmarried girl we were at the beginning of the 'eighties, horrified by the assassination of Lord Frederick Cavendish in Phænix Park and laughing at the aesthetic movement and wearing tight many-flounced skirts and buying at Jay's if we could afford it, or at Peter Robinson's if we were not quite so well off, mantles which we called 'visites'. It seems such an ineffably long time ago. And I wonder what I would have said if somebody had pointed to you in your perambulator and prophesied that nearly twenty years hence I should find in the arms of that infant the supreme expression of my emotional being.

When I was a small girl I had such heroic dreams of love, but my father's death and the loss of my brother made me look on men as creatures to be consoled above everything, and I think I married Ernest because I was sorry for him and because in my vanity I believed I should be able to make him happy. It is difficult when I look at two boys like Emil and Julius to say to myself that my marriage was a mistake, merely because I did not find it like one of the heroic dreams of my girlhood. And yet why should a girl have such dreams unless they are inspired by a profound idealism over the relationship of man to woman? I can't help resenting sometimes that the future of humanity should apparently be quite independent of passionate love. It seems to me somehow unnatural that two people can be casually linked by the sexual act and produce between them children superior as often as not to children produced by two people who are deeply in love with each other. And yet we have to

face the fact that this is so. The East has anticipated this kind of criticism from its women by making its women submissive to their husbands and laying down the principle that sexual gratification belongs of right only to the men. And yet the East always assumes that women will cheat their husbands if they can. Nowhere is women's natural depravity more insistently proclaimed than in the East. You will realize how much of our Eastern origin remains with us Jews of the West when you remember that in the ghettos of Central Europe to-day a Jewish woman shaves her head when she is married and for the rest of her life wears a wig to guard herself against the likelihood of attracting the glances of another man!

Why am I writing all this to you? I suppose I am bolstering up my resolve to make that night in Cracow an isolated event in both our lives. But do not think that I am weakening even if I do find it necessary to protect my resolve. I do not believe that were I able to delude myself with the fancy that I could hold you as my lover until death I would surrender to that fancy, because I love you enough to comprehend that whatever your future path may be you could not walk along it freely, tied to a woman twenty years older than yourself. I should dread that there might come a moment when you were drawing near to middle-age and when looking back at your prime you would say to yourself in sudden regret that it had passed away without the love of a beautiful young woman. You might look back to your lost Rose and remembering what might have been your passionate life with her turn to look at me with hatred—no, not with hatred but with disappointment in your eyes. And from

the moment I saw that expression I should always be dreading for you the follies which emotionally disappointed men are apt to commit in middle age. I could not bear to see you trying to gain from some second-rate love affair with a young woman the emotional contentment which I had failed to give you. And there are worse follies for starved middle-aged men than that. There are the pitiable erotic adventures which lead to the police-court.

But this is really all beside the point, because I have never been under the faintest delusion that I could hold you mine until you were middle-aged! Too many women will love you, and you are too kind, dearest John, to treat them all with a dignified indifference, and much too curious in any case. I acquit you of kindness or curiosity in your response to me. I tell myself that in a moment of emotional emptiness you found my arms welcome as the sun after the chilling wind which had swept through your blossoms. Indeed, I think I'm justified in telling myself that, because otherwise you could not have uttered those words spontaneously :

*The warmth of summer when she outsteps June
To lull the blossom of a windswept May.*

You spoke the emotional truth then, and why the emotional truth should so often versify itself unconsciously is as much beyond my æsthetic subtlety to guess as it would be for me to attempt a definition of poetry.

But even that warmth would have its danger for you should you abandon yourself to it now. If the wind of love blow too soon from the south it might enervate a young man. And it is best for you to think no more of

love for awhile, or at least of woman's love. Since you have made up your mind to go to the University I think you should go there and enjoy that protracted adolescence of which you and Julius were so scornful, but of which the value was to my mind more judiciously estimated by Emil. I wish with all my heart that Julius could protract his. I think it would be a mistake for you to enter upon your years at Oxford with a sense of difference from your contemporaries because instead of the ordinary last year of school you had spent a year of unusual emotional fullness for a boy. The more commonplace you make your University career—I mean by commonplace the more you enter into the life of the place as one of many students—the finer will be the filter through which your experience hitherto will pass, and I need hardly tell you that if you are to be an artist in any medium experience must pass through a very fine filter indeed, which I need not remind you implies a very slow filter. Academic tranquillity is what you now require. You have already been given a pledge by life that it holds for you infinite variety and absorbing passion. Let that be enough for the present. Ask no more of life for awhile as an extraordinary individual. You can be profoundly excited by life. Let that knowledge suffice and train yourself to use your capacity for being excited by life. Love, religion, art, politics, philosophy, they are all before you. Each one offers you a grande passion, but, as Goethe said, 'Ruh kommt aus Unruh, und wieder Unruh aus Ruh', and you now need a time of rest after unrest that unrest may succeed in its turn. I commend Goethe to you before you let yourself become too much absorbed by Nietzsche. I think no man lived with a purer love of truth, nor any

who sought for it more sanely withal, and sanity is not always a characteristic of searchers for the truth.

I doubt if I shall be in London before you go to Oxford. If this house of Julius's materializes I shall have to stay with him for a month or two if only to reassure myself on the subject of the woman we choose for his housekeeper. Emil can look after himself alone at Claremont Gardens for awhile. He told me to-day that he was determined to get up to Oxford next year and I am glad he has made up his mind. Mr Askew and Mr Harvey both wrote and assured me that nothing can stop his getting a scholarship at Balliol. Keep a place in your heart for him, John. I can appreciate what a gulf stretches between the various years, but a year's juniority will not be too much, I hope, for your friendship to continue at Oxford. His friendship for you at school has made an immense difference to him, indeed an overwhelming difference. Between you and me, he has been inclined to be a little jealous of your friendship with Julius. Jealousy is poor Emil's burden. I hope that as he grows older he will lose it. His father was an intensely jealous man, and lacking success as he did he fed upon his jealousy, but I am the fond mother who believes that her elder son will make a real mark in the world in a few years. He has an almost cruel perceptiveness. He guessed that I was in love with you even before I had really admitted as much to my innermost self. And I am wondering now if he has guessed how far the expression of that love was carried.

I am intensely happy, dearest John. You know those amber days of September in England when the sun begins to ride low and the shadows are longer? I bask

now in the mellow warmth of such a breathless September day, and I hold you for ever, John, enshrined in such amber. But do not suppose that I intend to tease you with sentimental re-evocations either by word or letter in the future. This is the last time I shall allude to those hours when you were my Endymion. To me you brought such rapture as . . . oh, but why seek for comparisons? You were yourself and you were in my arms, and in that fact my life has been granted what it lacked.

It is time I came to an end of this endless letter. I have been writing steadily for over three hours, but I hate to finish, just because it is to be the first and the last letter in which I speak of my love for you, or at any rate of that love for you which was expressed upon that August night in Cracow. I don't want you to allude to it at all when you write to me. Let me be still your dearest Miriam, but dearest as an older sister is dear. I'm glad you have no sisters, John, for if I can fancy myself a wise older sister I shall rob no woman of her privilege. Perhaps if I get back to England before term is over you will let me come down for an afternoon to Oxford? I should like to see your rooms and it will give me much authority with Emil. However, I shall wait for a really pressing invitation.

And now I have no excuse to protract any longer this already intolerably protracted letter. I will write again when we have some news of Julius's house. The more I think of that ridiculous child in his own house, the more I fancy I am reading some fairy-tale which begins 'once upon a time there lived in a house'.

I have just read through what I have written to

you, and how all the glow in my heart, which will beat for you, John, until it beats no longer in this puzzle of a world, seems damped by clumsy words. But remember, beloved boy, and that really is the last time I shall write or say those two words, remember that this heart of mine will always beat in sympathy, will always beat for you. Do not let a preposition like 'for' mislead you. If in the future you will always remember that in confiding in me you confide in your most secret self I shall not know I am growing old. When you told me about Rose I fought with myself (I had to fight with myself then) not to allow jealousy to distort my judgment. But then we had never heard that trumpeter blow his unfinished tune in Cracow. Then I had not given to you what it was seeming I had held within me all my life that it might be given to you.

And here is the end of this page. I have no room to write more than 'I love you'.

Miriam

John read through the dozen sheets of crackling foreign note-paper. Then he took his bicycle and rode into the heart of the Buckinghamshire beech-woods, which at this date provided the nearest completely rustic seclusion within reach of London, and spent a day of sylvan meditation.

The next morning he went up to Oxford and after making friends with one of the college servants on duty in the lodge he got a glimpse of the rooms that were to be his next term. He returned to London in the evening and ensconced himself in his own bedroom to answer Miriam Stern's letter:

98 CHURCH Row,
HAMPSTEAD,
N.W.

September 5, 1901.

If I begin by saying that your letter was exactly what I needed to steady myself it will sound as if I had taken to drink since I left Cracow, but I hope you'll know what I mean, and when I tell you that I spent the day I received your letter in lying under a huge beech-tree (apart from the sixty miles of bicycling involved in getting to the beech-tree and back) and pondering the wisdom of the advice you gave me you will know how important the letter was to me. And when I go on to tell you that to-day I have been up to Oxford with the spirit of your letter over me you will feel still surer of its effect upon my state of mind. All of which information could have been concentrated into the two words 'thank you'.

Cracow will be for ever and in every way unforgettable. But so is Fontainebleau, and so for that matter is the first day Emil invited me into Claremont Gardens. You gave me then something I had missed since the death of my mother, and since then you have given me so much that I can't begin to put my obligations down on paper. The only way in which I can try to repay your generosity is to take the fullest advantage of it, and that I will promise to do. And please don't think this is a promise lightly made. At the risk of sounding high-flown I will say that I would rather die than break that promise. And when I write that please read into it my consciousness of so much that I realize you do not want mentioned

again by me, but do not suppose that it is my own self-consciousness which prevents me from alluding to it. I think I can say without any youthful conceit that I understand the part I was lucky enough to be able to play in your life. I am grateful to your confidence in me, and whatever follies I commit in the future, although since knowing you I shall have less excuse for them, I shall reveal them to you with as much freedom as I hope I shall always know how to admit them to myself. Oh dear, this is all very involved and badly expressed, but I have not yet learnt how to tackle experience in words without becoming stilted. I seem to be back again in the toils of a sonnet.

I'll tell you about my visit to Oxford instead. It was a perfect day. I found a genial fellow in the college lodge who got one of the scouts to take me up to my rooms in Exeter. They are on the second floor in the front quad and look down into Turl Street, a narrow somewhat mediæval looking street, which runs from Broad Street to the famous High. The rooms themselves are tiny. I was told that in my second year I would get bigger ones, but I am rather fascinated by the monk's-cell effect, though the furniture which I shall have to buy from my predecessor on a valuation is beyond words! However, I suppose with one's own pictures and books one will forget about the furniture, which anyway if hideous is comfortable enough. In such rooms academic tranquillity is almost inevitable, and I made the most pious resolutions to devote myself to the school of Literæ Humaniores. I had been thinking of reading Modern History or English Literature, but I believe I'll stick to the classics through which I have been dragged since I was eight years old.

These last fifteen months of rest from them have given me a notion to return to them. However, perhaps I shall change my mind again. Anyhow, whatever school I read for I'll devote to it some of what my reports at the end of term have referred to as 'my undoubted abilities' and try to achieve from my application to them some of that diligence the lack of which has hitherto distressed a succession of schoolmasters. What you say about the fine filter is true, I'm convinced. And now that I have had a glimpse at life's excitement I do not so much grudge the pedantic grind.

After I had visited my monk's cell in Exeter I wandered round about some of the other colleges, and had a momentary return of discontent with the existing order of things when I walked through Magdalen, New College, Worcester, and an enchanting little place called St Edmund Hall, all of which make Exeter seem a little prosaic, if architecture and lawns and gardens be the criterion. I'm glad Emil is firmly set on coming up next year. I don't think you need worry about his juniority. If I preserve any of the sophistication of a second-year man after I have been ten minutes in his company I shall be extremely surprised. It will be interesting to find if his scorn of the past survives Oxford. Of course I'm a predestined mediævalist and therefore bound to succumb. In fact Oxford coming right on top of Cracow has been altogether too much for me. I'm not going to compete with Matthew Arnold by attempting an impressionist picture of Oxford as it was in the emptiness of an amber day in the Long Vacation. I thought of what you said in your letter about basking in the mellow warmth of such a day, and that is what I did in the gardens of college after

college, and I could say truly 'Ruh kommt aus Unruh'. Yes, I will read more of Goethe. As a matter of fact I have already read the conversations with Eckermann which with the correspondence of Flaubert and Georges Sand have taught me more than any books I have yet read. And I have read Wilhelm Meister, but I've not yet tackled Faust properly. You know my aspirations after the drama. I found some wonderful wisdom about that in the conversations.

Emil really must not be jealous of my friendship with Julius. It was a friendship which was bound to come as soon as Julius escaped from that brooding dream in which he was living when I first knew you all. And whether Emil likes it or not I am hoping to be invited by Julius to stay with him in his house among the corn-fields. I hope by living with him in intimate surroundings to obtain some insight into the mystery of music.

My stepmother is much better. In a few days I shall be performing the part of godfather to my infant brother. I am caught by the idea of this infant having been born at this moment when I am myself about to begin another stage in my development. I was thinking yesterday that in spite of the several lessons I have had already from life I am just as much of an unknown quantity as that infant, but by the time he is beginning to reach a fairly interesting age I hope I shall have some of the assurance which ought to come from a fresh experience of unrest after my period of rest. My father has been extremely decent since I came home. I'm afraid we shall never be really intimate because the only beliefs he seems to hold with any passion are as meaningless to me as the rubbish one reads, or rather avoids reading, in the

leaders of the Press. I've a theory that none of the people who write these leaders and none of the people who read them do really believe them, but only believe that they ought to believe them, which is not quite the same thing. In fact this attempt to believe what we ought to believe is to my mind the most obvious proof that we are getting nowhere and that we shall have to have another conflagration of the mind like the French Revolution before we find the road again. There surely never was a century like the one from which we have just mercifully escaped for fostering the rapid growth of an intellectual forest of soft-wooded ideas in which humanity could lose itself. We must cut and cut away and if necessary burn on a grand scale. I suppose the first clearance will be made by a great war. War is in the air. When I start thinking about the plays I want to write I get a feeling that it's all a waste of energy planning now before the crash comes. It's a pity Victoria lived on for that last decade, and that Franz Josef still lingers. If the two of them had vanished from the European scene say in 1890, the big war might have been over by now and we should be clearing up the débris.

Write to me as soon as this house is found. I shall see Emil before I see you. But when you come back to London you'll certainly have to come up to Oxford and I'll give you lunch in my monk's cell. The important part of this letter is not what I have written, but what I have not written. If only one could write poetry like that what great poets we should all be!

My father offered to stand me the fare back to Cracow so that I might finish my visit to you, but I thought you

would rather I stayed where I am, and we are having the christening party of David in about a fortnight.

With love,

Always your most devoted

John

The christening party had scarcely a hundred yards to walk to the ceremony, but at the last moment Elise Ogilvie herself was dissuaded by her mother from attending. It was the first time John had met Lady Hunter and he was much amused by observing his father's deference to that majestic dame. He was still more amused when Sir William, whom also he was meeting for the first time, said to him *sotto voce*:

"My wife has brought your father under the yoke, quelled the nurse, reduced our colleague Mrs Cregeen to the ranks, at any rate for all practical purposes, compelled you and me to talk in whispers, and is now sitting on the clergyman with the determination of a whole bench of bishops. So far so good. The question now is whether she will be able to tame our godson."

At that moment David let out a yell.

"Ha-ha," the grandfather chuckled. "She's defeated. Capital!"

Sir William Hunter was a neatly made man whose clean-shaven faintly rosy countenance was etched with innumerable fine wrinkles. His outstanding feature was a pair of extremely light humorous eyes to which the bushy slanting eyebrows still dark in contrast with his white hair

gave a perpetual expression of whimsical but sympathetic astonishment at the follies of mankind, particularly those of his majestic wife.

"Have you studied the ceremony which is before us?" he asked of John.

"I read it through in the Prayer Book this morning."

"We seem to be—er—assuming a very large responsibility," said Sir William. "And—er—committing the infant to a course of life which would empty the law courts if it were widely adopted. I think I shall leave the answers to you."

By now the baby had ceased crying and they were all gathered round the font of the ugly little eighteenth-century church which in spite of its ugliness had such a curious charm, such a redolence of former leisure, such a fragrant intimacy with the past.

Mrs Cregeen exquisitely corseted, gowned in mauve crêpe-de-Chine and wearing a large chip hat heavily trimmed with sprays of lilac, fluttered her violet-blue eyes at the judge.

"I am relying on you, Sir William, you know," she murmured archly.

"But you are not being christened, my dear Mrs Cregeen."

"Now you are not to make fun. That's really very naughty of you. Suppose we all made fun when you were sitting on the bench in your robes?"

"I should know how to deal with you."

"Hush, hush!" came reprovingly from Lady Hunter. "Mr Morrison is quite ready to begin."

The preliminary prayers were given out with all the unction which the sonorous sixteenth-century English

invites and presently the officiating clergyman was saying:

“I demand therefore

“Dost thou, in the name of this Child, renounce the Devil and all his works, the vain pomp and glory of the world, with all covetous desires of the same, and the carnal desires of the flesh, so that thou wilt not follow, nor be led by them?”

There was a momentary silence. Then John felt himself being prodded in the ribs by Sir William, and hastily gulped:

“I renounce them all.”

A minute or two later he had pledged himself on behalf of his infant brother to a steadfast belief in the articles of the Apostles' Creed, to a desire to be baptized in that faith, and to a promise obediently to keep God's holy will and commandments, and walk in the same all the days of his life.

“Bravo,” Sir William whispered, when the officiating clergyman had started more prayers. “I'll name the child, partner, I feel I can do that with impunity.”

When the water from the font was sprinkled upon David he let out a yell and continued to yell with increasing vigour while the officiating clergyman assured his dearly beloved brethren that this Child was regenerate and grafted into the body of Christ's Church.

“One ventures to hope that those yells are affirmative,” observed Sir William to his fellow-sponsor, “in spite of their somewhat negative suggestion.”

When the christening party had left the church the judge put his arm through John's and drew him aside to admire the view of London from the southward slope of the graveyard.

"We will give the others time to reach the house and follow them at our leisure," he announced. "I wonder why Elise selected that agreeable but empty-headed woman to be the godmother of our godson. As a colleague she does not strike me as being adequate for the position from any standpoint."

"I think she's very rich," said John.

"Ah, you impute to Elise's worldliness her choice of a worldling. You are probably right. A rich childless widow . . . yes, perhaps the choice was not such a bad one. Yet she may marry again. She is good-looking, well turned out, and has I am given to understand not a penny less than £8000 a year of an income. I cannot believe she will remain a lonely widow much longer. A charming survival, this churchyard," he continued, looking round him, "we might be in Stoke Poges itself. 'Each in his narrow cell for ever laid, the rude forefathers of the hamlet sleep.' Tell me, does Gray's *Elegy* impress the younger generation of to-day? I suppose not."

"It has always impressed me, sir, in spite of having had to turn it into Latin elegiacs."

"You don't find it mere rhetoric? The poetry of one period so easily becomes the rhetoric of the next:

"For who, to dumb forgetfulness a prey,
 This pleasing anxious being e'er resigned,
Left the warm precincts of the cheerful day,
 Nor cast one longing, ling'ring look behind?

"I expect you prefer:

"From too much love of living,
 From hope and fear set free,
We thank with brief thanksgiving
 Whatever gods may be

The Four Winds of Love

That no life lives for ever;
That dead men rise up never;
That even the weariest river
Winds somewhere safe to sea."

"I do like Swinburne very much, but I don't feel sure that I shall always like his poetry," replied John.

"Rhetoric, rhetoric too. But I think it would be fair to say that no poet has moralized on death without being discovered at last as a rhetorician. Not even Shakespeare. And the musician is hardly more successful. I noticed that particularly at the old Queen's funeral. Handel's Dead March with all the emotional help that use and familiarity could give it had a singular emptiness. It seemed as conventional an expression of grief as a crape-hung hatchment over the portals of a house in Belgravia. And Chopin's Funeral March was hardly more than a tear-bedewed lace handkerchief at a Brookwood graveside. I did not hear if they played Beethoven's funeral march from the Eroica, but even that grows as prosy as a panegyric for some dead French Academician. Wagner comes nearer in *Siegfried* to a statement of elemental mortality, but it is such an emphatic statement, too emphatic for the average mortal on his last journey."

"I know the first two marches you mentioned, sir, but I don't know the Beethoven march, and the only opera of Wagner's I've heard is *Tristan*."

"Is that so? I wonder how his music will survive during the next thirty years. I gain from it a most exciting contact with the fever of youth. It is the ambition of most judges to forget their position provided they can do so with dignity or at least without scandal. I escape from it by the help of Wagner's music. Yes," Sir William went

on, gazing in turn at the eighteenth-century church with its squat tower and steeple rising unusually from the east end, at the huddle of tombstones in a small wilderness of flowers and grass, and at the outspread golden haze of London stretching wide below them, "yes, this is a delightful spot . . . I hope that it will not have to be swept away for an orgy of building. And you are eighteen, eh?"

"Nineteen at the beginning of October," John added quickly.

"Just fifty years between us. And yet, you know, I call myself an old man merely in self-defence in order that others may at once contradict me. I do not in my heart consider myself an old man. Between ourselves, I fancy that Elise had a notion to flatter her father when she invited him to share with a young man like yourself the spiritual responsibilities we jointly undertook just now. Forgive the essential impertinence of the question I am going to ask and do not hesitate to ignore it if you do not wish to gratify my curiosity, but could you have answered with equal self-assurance those questions we were asked by the parson if you had not been pledging an infant?"

"Do you mean do I really believe the Apostles' Creed?"

Sir William nodded.

"I'm glad you did ask me that, sir, because on one or two occasions I have asked older people if they really believed something, and I have noticed that they always seemed to resent such a question. Well, I can only reply that I don't know. I don't even know if I believe that I believe or if I believe that I don't believe. I'm afraid that

sounds a little involved. Until last month I could not have told you whether I had any positive belief in a spiritual reality behind the world of our senses; but a conviction of that was suddenly forced upon me in what seemed—well, indeed it *was* a moment of illumination, and after that experience I shall never be able to possess any security of unbelief again. I hope that by the light of that momentary flash I shall discover the particular truths of the religion which is the truth. And now may I ask you something, sir?"

"Ask away by all means."

"When you are sitting in judgment do you really believe that the laws you administer are always good laws?"

"By good laws do you mean useful laws?"

"No, no," said John eagerly. "I mean laws which never contravene the truth of this universe, or I would rather say the truth of God revealing Himself in this universe, or perhaps it would be nearer to my meaning if I said 'this life' in which you and I are at the moment sitting among the tombs of a Hampstead churchyard."

The judge pondered awhile before replying.

"Yes," he said at length, "I think I can honestly declare that I believe in the goodness of the law, though I will admit that I have been several times aware of desiring to change the law to suit a particular occasion. After all, the law as the sum of human experience up to now carries a good deal of weight."

"But legal systems vary. Do you always feel sure that English law is the best?"

"For England, certainly."

"Do you never have a doubt whether the unhappiness and actual want of so high a proportion of the people in

England and indeed everywhere in Europe may not be a reflection on the law?"

"No, not upon the law, because the law never outsteps the potentiality of man for good. The law follows: it does not lead. When it leads the state is in danger."

"Yes, we once had an essay more or less on that. 'Corruptissima republica plurimae leges' from Tacitus was the theme."

"And what did you argue?"

"I argued that in an ideal state laws would be unnecessary and that every new law added to our present ones was an impediment in the way of that ideal state. I am beginning to think with a conviction growing stronger all the time that we are approaching very near to the necessity for destroying the social system of which our legal system is an expression. Don't you ever say to yourself, sir, that there must be something wrong at a period like this, when there is more than enough to feed and clothe and house every man, woman, and child in the country, if at least four-fifths of the population live in perpetual anxiety about the future? And do you never suspect, sir, that the thrift which in your official capacity you are bound to uphold as a virtue may be not merely not a virtue, but even, if judged by its practical value for that anxious four-fifths of the population, a deadly sin?"

"Thrift a sin, eh? Well, well, well, is that what young people are going to start promulgating?"

"What I mean is that if you make a man save his money in order to guard himself against a miserable old age you are encouraging the accumulation of money and inviting usury under the euphemism of interest, the result of which must be ultimately to cripple the sane development

of the country by concentrating money in the hands of the few. It's presumptuous of me, sir, to talk like this, I know, but you asked me what I believed, and the most fervid belief I have at the moment is in the social injustice of civilization in its present stage. I hate imperialism, but I am not clear yet whether I would smash imperialism by trying to rebuild the world on a scale of smaller national unities or by cutting the ground away underneath by destroying capitalism."

"But destruction of some kind, more or less violent, is to be the order of the day? You are positive on that point?"

"I think it must be. The French Revolution degenerated into the Second Empire and is now almost invisible in the Third Republic. The Reform Act was overlaid by the heavy body of Victorianism. The Franco-Prussian War bred this gimcrack German Empire of to-day. Austria has been decaying since 1866. I believe that salvation will come to mankind from Russia."

"From Russia? How do you descry that upon the horizon?"

"Have you read any of Dostoievsky's novels, sir?"

"Yes, I read a book called *Crime and Punishment*. Remarkable in its way, but too morbid to count as great literature."

"You never read *The Idiot*? I came across it this summer in a cheap translation published by Vizitelly. It's the first book I ever read which seemed to me to bring Christ into relation with the world of to-day. And then I got hold of a French translation of another of his novels—*Les Frères Karamazov*, which is really a stupendous work. I'm boring you, sir?"

Sir William had turned away for a moment to look along Church Row.

"You're not boring me at all, but I was thinking that we two godfathers ought to be showing ourselves at the post-baptismal festivities. But finish what you were telling me as we stroll back."

"When I'd thought about these two books of Dostoievsky," John continued, "it was somehow borne in on my mind that Christianity might be entering upon its third and final phase. I was thinking that it began with Petrine Christianity which gave way at the Reformation to Pauline Christianity, and now it seems to me that the mission of Pauline Christianity is finished and that mankind must pass on to Johannine Christianity which I believe will come from Russia, but of course not until the Russian Empire is overthrown by the Russian people."

"Look here, we can't dig into this matter with other obligations hanging over us," said the judge. "But I have to be in town for a couple of days. Come and dine with me to-night at a chop-house I have frequented since I was a student at the Inner Temple, not so far from fifty years ago. We will have a bottle of Mouton-Rothschild and some '33 brandy just a year younger than myself. Old Niblett died some twenty years back, and his son has been good enough to take my advice from time to time about his cellar."

At this date chop-houses like Niblett's did not make their frequenters feel that they were eating in a showman's booth. The whiskered English waiters, the spittoons and the sawdust, the wooden seats with straight backs polished by long usage, and the carelessly scribbled bill of fare or ordinary of the day did not suggest a self-conscious gather-

ing of the Dickens Fellowship. People ate at such places because the food was English, good, and cheap, and in the case of Niblett's some went there for the wine too, and not so much for the Bristol Cream or Fine Old Crusted as for the choice claret, because even by 1901 the number of eating-houses in London where the customer could rely upon a good bottle of claret was small.

John had called for his host at the Reform Club and while waiting for him in the sombre atrium kept between his fingers the cigarette he had been smoking on his way along Pall Mall.

"Excuse me, sir," a lugubrious voice murmured in his ear. "No smoking is allowed in this portion of the Club."

John blushed at the rebuke and was looking for some receptacle for the offending cigarette, which was not even a plump Turkish Sullivan or Bateman, but a slim Guinea Gold Virginian, when his host came to the rescue.

"That's all right, Wood. My guest and I are going out immediately."

"Very good, Sir William," replied the club servant with a deference which in spite of its profundity managed to suggest a faint surprise at the levity of the judge's announcement and the kind of company he kept.

"It was my fault, my dear boy. I should have warned you against our antediluvian habits. We cherish the prohibition against smoking anywhere except in the rooms licensed for the pastime. A few of the senior members—I am sometimes among them—will occasionally venture to carry a lighted cigar under their coats quickly through the hall and thus escape the disapproval in Wood's ancient and severe eye, but that is the limit of our profanity. In

spite of our name Reform our radicalism is no longer perceptible. Indeed, a faint murmur of relief when a conservative victory goes up on the board at a general election is the only sign that we take any interest in contemporary life at all. Hansom! Jump in, my dear boy. Niblett's Chop-house," Sir William told the driver as he followed John into the cab.

"Let me see, sir, that's"

"In the Strand opposite Appenrodt's," said Sir William sharply.

"I know, sir," said the cabby without a sign of being ashamed of his hesitation, and in fact with a grin and a wink.

"A sad commentary on London life to-day, that in order to direct a London cabman to a chop-house established for nigh on a century I have to guide him to it by way of a modern German *delicatessen* shop."

It was half-past seven when the hansom pulled up before a narrow bow-windowed house squeezed between an outfitter's and a jeweller's. A moment later Sir William and his guest had passed through into Niblett's Chop-house with its mingled odour of wine, sawdust, and grilling meat. The proprietor, a prodigiously fat man in shirtsleeves and an apron, came forward to greet the judge.

"Good evening, Sir William," he wheezed. "I had your message. Everything is ready. I've got you the finest piece of rump steak I've seen this year. Beautiful!"

You're going to enjoy it, Sir William. And I've laid for you in the little room upstairs, as you had a guest."

The fat man who was extremely active for his size led the way up a narrow staircase and opened the door of a small panelled room, the walls hung with sporting prints of which a particularly good impression of *The Melton Hunt Breakfast* was the show picture. Most of the space was occupied by a mahogany table and solid mahogany chairs with leather seats. In the centre of the table was a big Lowestoft bowl crammed with double dahlias of every colour.

"My married daughter sent those up this morning from Saffron Walden," observed Mr Niblett. "And now, Sir William, will you do me the honour of drinking a glass of sherry with me? And you, sir?" he added, turning to John.

"This is my step-grandson-in-law, Niblett," said Sir William.

Mr Niblett rubbed the back of his head to suggest a courteous perplexity.

"Wait a moment now, Sir William, that's a new relationship to me, that is."

"I'll say my daughter's stepson."

"What it is to be one of Her Majesty's . . . His Majesty's Judges, I should say . . . everything stated as clear as gin. Now, Sir William, I'd very much like your opinion of that sherry. A little . . . a leetle too sweet? . . . yes, dash it, I knew you'd think that. Still it has a nice round body . . ."

"Oh, it's a capital wine, Niblett," the judge allowed. "But not superlative. I find a tendency nowadays to accept sherries with too easy an enthusiasm."

It was after they had finished with a steak which justified all the host had claimed for it, with the Welsh rarebit for which the house was famous, and with a basket of peaches specially picked out at Covent Garden, and after Sir William had sipped his brandy for a while in meditative silence that he poured himself out another glass and turning to his guest invited him to take up the conversation in the churchyard which had been interrupted that afternoon by the claims of the christening party.

"Your suggestion about a new phase of Christianity coming from Russia and your theory about the two preceding phases struck me. Shall we examine the theory more closely? I take it that by Petrine Christianity you mean the formative institutional process dependent for its success upon the ability of the Church of Rome to take the fullest advantage of the favour of Constantine?"

"Yes, sir, and the development of that progress through the Middle Ages."

"And you think that Christianity underwent a radical change at the Reformation? You don't regard it as the restoration of a religion nearer to the spirit of its Founder?"

"Well, that's the Evangelicals' claim, but I can't find any grounds for it in the Gospels themselves. It seems to me that Calvinists and Lutherans and the rest of them rely almost entirely on their interpretation of the epistles of St Paul. And I think St Paul missed the advantage of an occasional snub from the mouth of Christ Himself. And it seems to me that Protestant theology was essentially an attempt to counter the supposed destruction of the Church's authority by the New Learning by substituting for that authority the

assurance of a personal faith in Christ the Redeemer. And then, as it seems to me, this personal faith has gradually grown weaker for various reasons but chiefly through an advance of material knowledge coinciding with the burning out of individual fervour. It was when I read this Russian writer's books that I became aware of the kindling of a fresh fire. It was rather rash of me to say what I did to you, because I haven't the historical knowledge to support my theory, and so I have to fall back on intuition, which is not very satisfactory. While I was reading Dostoievsky I was conscious of a kind of excitement as if I were all the time on the verge of some tremendous discovery, as if truth were near at hand and that at any moment I should come face to face with it. I have the same feeling sometimes when, waking abruptly from deep sleep, I try to recapture the dream I have just left. And even some time after such a sleep, perhaps several days later, a remark will be made and I will have the conviction that the true answer or comment was in my mind during some dream. But I'm afraid I'm talking too much, sir."

"No, no," said the older man, "but I want to get back to this Russian notion of yours. Let us assume for a moment that your intuition is correct and that what we will call the preparation of a third phase of the Christian revelation is at this moment discernible in Russia. Do you suppose that this will be compatible with the endurance of the great political system to which we both adhere?"

"You mean the prestige and dominance of the British Empire?"

"Precisely. In terms of the Christian revelation, which

for the sake of this discussion we are accepting as the truth of God, the endurance of the British Empire depends on the validity, efficacy, and sufficiency of the British imperial idea. I note with what I confess is some disquiet that the younger generation is beginning to question all three qualities. I recognize that there may be a temporary reaction due to the disillusionment brought about by the feeble conduct of the war in South Africa, but that such a reaction can so easily be established appears to me ominous. Am I pressing you to answer too large a question when I ask you to tell me what it is which causes you young people to take up this extremely critical attitude toward an institution which has seemed to the previous generation impregnable?"

"It is a large question, sir," John replied. "And if I try to answer it from my personal opinions they will probably strike you as too eccentric to be worth consideration."

"Revolutions begin when a number of eccentric opinions discover for themselves a common centre, even if such a common centre be nothing more intellectually substantial than dissatisfaction with what is. So let me have some of your eccentric opinions."

John hesitated. It was one thing to babble on with Emil or Fitz, but another thing altogether to babble on under the bright eyes and slightly astonished eyebrows of a Lord Justice of the Court of Appeal.

"But, sir, you'll think I'm talking rot."

"That's very probable," Sir William agreed. "But if I disagree with you, although you will grant me the courtesy of appearing to listen with deference, you will think I'm thinking 'rot' as you tersely describe it. Old men may be

divided roughly into two classes. There are those who at seventy wish to spend the few years left to them in retrospective contemplation and console themselves for their imminent exit from the stage of this mortal life by reflecting that the play about to be produced is in every way inferior to that in which they have acted their parts, and there are those who at seventy are tormented by an insatiable curiosity about the play of which they will not be even spectators. The second class is a small minority. Goethe belonged to it. So do I. And now, come, you have practically admitted to me your belief in the passing of the British Empire. You owe my curiosity the gratification of indicating why."

"Well, I suppose in the first place all empires pass."

"Tout lasse, tout casse, tout passe, as the French proverb has it. But that's no opinion for youth to hold *a priori*. Moreover, it does not take into account the extraordinary adaptability of the British race. The lesson learnt over the American colonies will not be so easily forgotten."

"I should have thought the treatment of Ireland during the nineteenth century showed that it had been almost ignored. In fact the fundamental weakness of the British Empire may be its failure to realize its lack of racial homogeneity and consequently its over-confidence in an instinctive unity at every moment of crisis."

"If we may judge by the answer which the Colonies gave to the South African crisis surely we are entitled to feel the profoundest confidence in such unity?"

"There must be an adventurous element in every people, sir. I would not attach a great deal of imperial importance, for instance, to the City Imperial Volunteers

or the Imperial Yeomanry. I wanted to enlist in the Yeomanry myself, and I think my reason was about the same as that of most—boredom with the humdrum of school in my case, of office work in the case of others. But I think, sir, if I may say so, that any discussion of the significance of the volunteer help from home or the Colonies during this war is rather beside the point. I'm not suggesting and I don't know any contemporaries of mine who do suggest, that the British Empire is going to pieces before our eyes. And I don't believe that it will ever go to pieces in war. Indeed, war is likely to weld it more firmly than before unless war changes its character completely, which of course is always possible while scientific invention continues at the pace it is going. It seems to me that the decline of the British Empire if it should come will come with the decline of its own spiritual ideals and its inability to stand against other ideals or, in spite of what you say about its adaptability, to remain itself and absorb fresh spiritual ideas from without."

"But these spiritual ideals of the British Empire," the judge protested. "Surely you do not claim any self-conscious mission for the British imperial idea? I should have thought that like the Roman imperial idea it was an application to the rest of the world of what was implied by the words *civis Romanus*. I should have said that the Englishman took his imperial mission as much for granted as his own behaviour."

"But, sir, I should have thought that there was a definite conception of an imperium dating from the reign of Elizabeth, and if that can be discerned we must admit that it was not a British imperium, using the silly word British to represent the amalgamation of England,

Scotland, Ireland, Wales and Cornwall, but an English imperium begotten by Elizabeth and Burghley and expressing the peculiar genius of the English people. I can't help thinking that there would not have been so much insistence on the headship of the Church of England if there had not been a direct intention to support material advance with spiritual authority. Well, then came the Stuarts who never felt quite sure that they were English monarchs and who in order to impose themselves upon the English invented the doctrine of the divine right of kings. The first two of them were logical enough to see that there was something spiritually wrong with an Anglican king in England who was a Presbyterian king in Scotland, and it seems to me that when the English cut off the head of Charles I they cut away the spiritual foundation on which Elizabeth and Burghley had built up the English imperial idea, which was after all founded upon the expected destruction of the Church of Rome to whose spiritual domination the Anglican Church must have hoped to succeed, with a layman as indubitable head and a pack of lawyers elaborating their own craft in place of the priesthood for having destroyed which men were patting themselves on the back."

"You are severe on lawyers," said the judge, when John paused breathless, "yet they are the main props of a stable society."

"Well, sir, I must be frank and tell you that I really hate the tyranny of lawyers. I can only see them as the villains of the piece ever since the sixteenth century. And I think the most damaging criticism one can level against the Established Church is the way it truckles to lawyers."

"As when for instance?"

"I won't say directly to lawyers, but to the authority to the maintenance of which the law is directed. I suppose you could take the Litany in the Book of Common Prayer as the most complete exposition of the express beliefs of the Church of England. And the effect is that God's second choice among peoples is praying to be protected, encouraged, and rewarded for being His recently chosen people and that the most important boon He can grant His people is to look after the King, the Royal Family, the Lords of the Council, the Nobility, and the Magistrates. I'm not setting out to criticize that attitude of mind by suggesting that it offers a pretty thin gruel in the way of spiritual nourishment, but what I must point out is that by cutting off the head of Charles I the English denied a fundamental principle of their religion. No wonder the later Stuarts remained Roman Catholics, but with a somewhat clumsy logic clung to the doctrine of the divine right of kings.

"Well, that was shattered by the Revolution and finally buried out of sight by the Hanoverian succession. Your English adaptability, sir, contrived to swallow an arrangement by which a king without divine right was nevertheless head of the Anglican Church, and the spiritual idea behind that State Church developed from being the supreme expression of the second phase of Christianity into being the supreme expression of that cultural ideal which we imply with the word 'gentleman', in fact the *civis Romanus* in another guise. Then 'gentleman' came to be used as a distinguishing title for somebody of a certain social eminence and material independence, and I doubt if in another fifty years the word 'gentle-

man' will be anything except a derogatory term for a drone.

"Now my theory is that by failing to assimilate the spiritual and social ideals of the other nations which helped them to create the British Empire and by imposing upon them instead purely English ideals and standards the English have failed to produce an indestructible political entity. That being so there must be thousands of British subjects who feel a doubt about the future and who are torn between their loyalty to a traditional patriotism and their belief in new social ideals. You asked me, sir, what the young men of the moment were feeling about the Empire. If I may judge by my friends, I would say that the people of my age are beginning to realize that the British Empire is merely a commercial concern which under the appearance of an altruistic morality exploits weaker nations. We feel that the other so-called empires are no better, and for that reason we do not consider ourselves unpatriotic by criticizing; but I think most of us do not feel perfectly sure that if some other nation produced a social ideal which would benefit the whole of the human race we should greatly regret the discrediting of the British imperial idea. We have been sickened by the mush of a Rudyard Kipling. We cannot see in what is proclaimed to be the spiritual voice of the British Empire at the peak of its renown and power anything better than a catchpenny jingle of words. We feel that the white man's burden is a bundle of humbug when we remember the poor of this rich land. We hate the despicable party politicians who play an elaborate game for their own careers. We resent the signs we see of enslaving still further the individual

for the sake of the smoothness of the commercial machine. We believe that the Victorian age from start to finish was a betrayal of the century which passed the Reform Act, and we denounce this cynical South African war as the ultimate outrage of Victorianism."

"And how is the new age going to attack these enormities?" Sir William asked.

"Yes, I'm afraid I have been rather incoherent. And I'm afraid we haven't yet discovered the passionate faith which will make us forget our discontent in the pursuit of some positive clearly defined goal. I have a friend, an Irishman, who has a passionate faith in the possible freedom of Ireland. I should like to have an equally passionate faith in the possible freedom of Scotland . . ."

"Forgive me," Sir William interposed, "but what exactly do you mean by freedom in this connection?"

"Separation from the British Empire in order to live its own national life without what are called imperial obligations, which may mean such obligations as we have recently undertaken in Africa to destroy the independence of two small states, as we undertook in Egypt, and I would add India too."

"I think your Irish friend has set himself a hard test of faith, and I might remind you that these two small states whose destruction you lament had not hesitated to destroy the aboriginal owners of their country. But do not stop to argue with me. Let us reach your conclusion."

"Another friend of mine has an equally passionate faith in the possible destruction of capitalism and the achievement of perpetual international peace."

"Humph! I must say your young friends are full of enterprise. Does that last ideal attract you?"

"Yes, it does, but it would attract me more if it were based on an attempt to put into effect the third phase of Christianity of which I have this intuition. And I'm afraid I must add that the reason for this is egotistical, because I cannot definitely believe and I cannot definitely not believe in the Christian religion, and if some new furnace of Christianity blazed up I should be able to get rid for ever of that gnawing doubt of its historical truth."

"And by that you mean?"

"That everything happened as we read of its happening in the Bible. A pragmatic truth isn't enough for my mental comfort."

"I haven't read those books of Dostoievsky which have filled you with such an *ardor vitae*, but I don't quite see how the illustration of them by some national awakening would prove the historical truth of the Christian religion. A faith which has lasted nineteen hundred years must be granted a pragmatic value and so perhaps a pragmatic truth which renders it independent of historical truth. And I don't see how you are going to establish whether this expected national awakening in Russia is inspired by pragmatic or historic Christianity. As I see it from an old man's standpoint the desire to believe in an historic Christianity is the assurance it would give the individual of a self-conscious immortality. And that belief I venture to think will not be affected by the manner of life in this world inculcated by your prophet Dostoievsky.

"I think we may take it as certain that if humanity, or let us qualify by saying Western humanity, were

convinced to a man of personal immortality its conduct in this world would be very different from what it is. And there is no doubt that most of us feel a slight grievance against God for not making it certain that we *are* immortal — certain I mean in the circumstantial way we appreciate certainty on the Bench. Yet as I grow old I begin to apprehend the wisdom of God in withholding such circumstantial proof, assuming of course that there is a God and that we are immortal. I apprehend that without this doubt man's life in this world would be an extraordinarily dull business. In fact it wouldn't in our conception of the word be life at all. On the other hand if eternal oblivion is the goal of death it is difficult to account for this strange and indeed on the face of it this preposterous belief in immortality. And in implanting this doubt agnostics might have to recognize as profound a wisdom in Nature as in God.

"However, that digression on immortality is by the way. What I wanted to observe was that the British imperial idea has evolved what I would claim to be the most workable system yet evolved of a pragmatic Christianity. It has moved forward on the whole with a caution and a conservatism that the Church of Rome itself might admire. Throughout the progress of this Empire to the position it occupies to-day the motto has been 'slow but sure', and in spite of the disgust which the younger generation appears to be taking to the imperial idea, I venture to express my belief that the British Empire is only now beginning to achieve a condition of completeness which will enable it to carry out its historical mission in the development of this world of ours. And what have you really against it? You are irritated by the vulgarities

of jingo sentiment. You think that Rudyard Kipling should be twanging the old-fashioned lyre instead of blowing a trombone. But that is all superficial prejudice. No empire has achieved its expansion so much to the advantage of the smaller nations it has incorporated."

"But I object to all imperialism, sir. A country is conquered and annexed because it stands in the way of imperial development. Capital is then invested in it by the conquerors, and when the exploited nation demands its freedom that freedom is refused because it would mean a loss of capital."

"You misled me a little by that dissertation on the divine right of kings. I begin to see that the real attack is on capitalism of which imperialism is the chief prop, eh?"

"I told you that my opinions were eccentric, sir. I was trying to find a root cause for the failure of British imperialism to make any notable contribution to the things which are not Cæsar's, and I was wondering if I had found it in the early abandonment of the principle on which it was founded and of the claims it then put forward."

"I should say on the other hand that the transference of sovereignty to the people was magnificently carried through by the English at the least possible cost in suffering to the majority. That by itself strikes me as a justification for ever of British imperialism. We had a queen who was, and we now have a king who is the visible incarnation of his people. We need not concern ourselves with a passing theory like divine right. *Vox populi habet aliquid divinum*, as Bacon said, and Bacon forms with Burghley, Elizabeth, and Shakespeare the square corner-stone on which our England of to-day is built."

"But, sir, I must argue that the people whose voice is divine means the people with enough money to give them a stake in the country. You asked me to talk to you as one of the younger generation, and I can assure you that by whatever chain of reasoning we achieve our opinion there is no doubt that we all feel the social injustice which refuses to share equitably the riches of a world growing materially richer every day."

"Young people have always thought so about the distribution of wealth. Thackeray has a delightful couple of pages on that subject in *Pendennis* when his hero is at the University. Even that respectable old gentleman Browning of whom I used to see a great deal during his last years wrote 'Just for a handful of silver he left us' when Wordsworth once a revolutionary became Poet Laureate, and poor Swinburne's latest effusions have Kipling fairly kippled. Still, that doesn't prevent the hard fact of revolution, you will tell me, and I have no doubt this century will see many a revolution before it wears to an end. We have not considered the possibility of a great European war. I don't see how that will be averted for many more years. So if I were you I should make the most of your time at Oxford and the most of your time in the years immediately after you go down. I smell change in the air."

The judge pointed to the coloured print of *The Melton Hunt Breakfast* on the panelled wall of the little room.

"That gathering of lords and baronets and squires so secure of the privileges of their class and the permanence of their order will appear as fantastic an illustration of social habits as the Bayeux tapestry before this century is out. Indeed, long before you are my age you may be

looking back even to this dinner of ours as to a feast in the *Odyssey*. So make the most of these years. I could not help smiling to myself at what you were promising on behalf of that young brother of yours. His grandfather could not bring himself to do as much. Come along, we'll take a turn in the Temple and walk off the effect of Niblett's Welsh rarebit."

It was just after half-past nine. At this hour when the business of the day was long finished and the theatres had absorbed the seekers after amusement the Strand seemed empty, and they walked along at a good pace eastward. Yet, when they turned aside to enter the Temple and the rolling of the omnibuses was suddenly hushed as the sea is hushed by an interposed cliff, the silence of the Temple made John realize how illusory the emptiness of the Strand had been.

They paced for a while the court above the gardens, offering a tribute as it were to the tranquillity of the surroundings by their abstention from conversation. The trees were motionless; but the air had a faint chill which breathed a whisper of autumn's swift approach, and here and there the sound of a quick footfall of somebody hurrying back to his chambers said that time was passing.

"You must forgive an old man for having abused his hospitality by luring you into talking so much, my dear boy. And the way you will forgive me is by refusing to reproach yourself for having talked too much when we have bid each other a good night."

"I'm afraid I've talked a lot of nonsense."

"In one way, yes, but there is a kind of nonsense which has its value. I didn't want to argue with you, I

wanted, in the vampirish way of old men, or at any rate of some old men, to enjoy your youth, which gave just an added bloom to the Mouton-Rothschild and made it perfect. So don't reproach yourself, because I enjoyed your nonsense. In my position I have to listen to so much carefully considered opinion, to so much studied exposition, that the sound of disjointed formless ideas tumbling over one another can be immensely refreshing. So pray give me the pleasure of supposing that you enjoyed our little dinner as much as I did myself, and if your indictment of the British Empire leaves me an unabashed administrator of its justice, do not attribute such obstinacy to the failure of your eloquence. I am famous for the difficulty I experience in being convinced. Counsel hate my obstinacy. And now let me commend to you the charm of this essentially English product."

Sir William waved his arm slowly round him to call his guest's attention to the Temple scene.

"You will no doubt say to yourself that the sentimentality of an old dodderer over architecture is an inadequate defence of that mighty institution you condemn. But surely you cannot resist the charm of it, and I urge at any rate a temporary surrender to that charm, which you will find in much greater perfection at Oxford. It will do your principles as you will call them, your prejudices as I should call them, no hurt if you do surrender to this mellowness for a while. Forget the fever of the present and learn something from the fever of the past. Man's temperature was always a little above normal. I believe that a first in your final schools—by the way what are you reading?"

"Greats."

"Capital! I am already relieved. As I was going to say, I believe that a first is vital only to a schoolmaster, but you will enjoy the satisfaction of a first in *Literae Humaniores* for the rest of your life, even if you do turn into a Marat or a Robespierre. I still enjoy my own first in Greats. And why not follow up that first in Greats with a first in Modern History, and that with a fellowship at All Souls, which is worth while if only for the enjoyment of the Warden's conversation? Hullo, ten is striking! I'm off to my bed. You'd better go out by Middle Temple Lane. These quiet September nights are tempting to those of us who are beginning to count the summers before us. We'll dine together again soon. And don't discourage my son-in-law from his parliamentary career. He'll have a good chance of being Solicitor-General. Good night."

Sir William chuckled to himself, and a moment or two later his own quick footfall was saying like the rest that time was on its way.

When John left the Temple he started to make his way northward through the wilderness of shattered houses and obliterated streets and alleys which marked the progress of the London County Council's ambitious scheme to provide that thoroughfare between Holborn and the Strand familiar now as Kingsway, which was to solve the problem of London traffic. In spite of his host's parting injunction not to reproach himself with having talked too much he could not refrain from doing so. It

was a mistake to dine out and suppose that wine and brandy could be drunk without letting the tongue run away with itself. It was wine and brandy which had possessed him when he embarked on that attempt to put into words his theory of the three phases of Christianity, to sustain which he lacked at present the knowledge. That kind of illumination which appeared so bright when it flashed first upon the mind was like striking a sulphur-tipped match to light up Westminster Abbey or the Houses of Parliament or the Law Courts. Fatuous! Another twenty years of reading, another twenty years of experience, another twenty years of meditation were required to test such a theory. He had made a complete fool of himself this evening. What he should have done was to sip the claret and the brandy and draw Sir William out to talk instead of chattering away to him like a gushing schoolgirl who had just passed the London Matriculation. It was all very well for the old boy to reassure him, but if he had not made an ass of himself the old boy would never have bothered to reassure him like that. The most stupid move in the argument had been in using at second hand Emil's theory about capitalism. After all, he was not near to being convinced himself yet that capitalism was the root of the evil. It was a good thing the old boy had not pressed him hard there. He would soon have been floundering. That advice at the end had been neatly given. What it amounted to was that in Sir William's eyes he was an ignoramus; but an ignoramus with brains and that if he made use of those brains he might hope to get somewhere one day. In effect it was the same advice as Miriam had given him.

John had reached Tottenham Court Road and had

paused on the pavement at the corner to make up his mind whether he should board an omnibus or stand himself the luxury of a hansom as far as Swiss Cottage when he heard a voice behind him offer a penny for his thoughts and looking round he saw the little woman who had come to his rescue in Geneva last year.

"Good lord, it's you!" he exclaimed.

She drew back in obvious alarm at being recognized. Then she recognized him.

"Why, it's Johnnie! My word, you did make me feel funny when you said 'it's you'!"

"But I thought you knew it was me."

"Did you?"

The tone in which she asked the question struck him as strange. He noticed that her cheeks were heavily rouged and that the dress she was wearing had too summery a look for this September night in which the chill of autumn could be felt. She had the air of a flower which has outlived its season, pinched already and likely soon to droop in ignominious solitude among more robust plants.

"Let's go somewhere and talk. Would you like supper or something?"

"I'd like a cup of coffee."

He looked in the direction of the Horseshoe tavern, but she shook her head, and as she did so he noticed that her white straw hat decked with red roses flopped awkwardly. The hat like herself was a pathetic survival of midsummer.

"No, not in a great noisy place like that, Johnnie. Let's go to some quiet place."

They walked on up Tottenham Court Road, but did

not find any suitable place, and in the end a choice had to be made between the clatter of a fish and chip shop and the saloon bar of a dreary-looking public-house. They decided on the saloon bar.

"I doubt if they'll have any coffee here fit to drink," said John when they were seated on chairs covered with stained and faded crimson plush at a round mahogany table the pedestal of which was heavily and hideously ornate with unnatural fruits.

"Oh well, it doesn't matter, I'll have a whisky hot with lemon. It's quite chilly to-night."

"You ought to have a coat on," said John severely.

"Ought I? Oh well, uncle doesn't think so."

"Your uncle?" he repeated in astonishment.

"Aren't you an innocent? The pawnbroker, silly."

"Oh, I'm sorry! You've had to pawn your coat? . . . Look here, I wish you had let me take you somewhere for a proper supper. You can only get ham sandwiches here apparently."

The little woman nodded.

"Yes, I see myself going out to supper with you, looking like something which had been forgotten at the bottom of the clothes-basket last week. But I will have a sandwich. Walking about at night does make anyone feel a bit hungry."

"Why are you walking about at night, Cissie?"

"I'm not doing it for my figure, that's a sure thing. Go on, what's the use in asking questions like that, Johnnie? You may be innocent, but you're not as innocent as all that."

"You're not . . ." he hesitated.

"Yes, I'm on the game. Don't look so shocked."

He hid his confusion by getting up and walking across to the bar to fetch Cissie's hot whisky and the sandwiches. He had not had any real doubt about the state of affairs. Nevertheless to hear it proclaimed like that had left him without any comment which would not sound inane.

"Here, aren't you going to drink anything?" she asked when he came back to the table.

"I forgot. I'll have a Bass."

He returned to the bar. While the barmaid was pouring out the Bass he looked from her to Cissie. She was one of those creatures now seeming as mythical as the Sirens, who miraculously squeezed their abundant shapes into hour-glass corsets and plaited their hair like beehives; beside her self-possessed carnality Cissie appeared a ridiculously unsuitable figure to rouse masculine desire. Perhaps the barmaid was indulging in a similar reflection, for as she poured out the Bass she stared from ice-cold calculating blue eyes at each of her two customers in turn.

John carried his glass over to the table, and to put an end to the awkwardness invited Cissie to tell him what had happened between the time he left her in Geneva and now.

"Well, it happened through an advertisement," she said. "After I finished at the Café Etoile last September I went back to France, and where I always like to be best really, and I got a job at a café concert in Bordeaux where I'd been working before. I had a friend in Bordeaux, an English fellow who was a clerk with one of the wine-shippers. He was a good age, over fifty I should say, but he wasn't married and he used to be very good to me. Of course, I didn't care for him in that way, well,

for one thing he had a moustache which made you feel you was going under Westminister Bridge when he kissed you. Still, there it was. He was very good to me, and it doesn't do to be too particular when you're a girl like me who doesn't really attract only men who nobody else will look at. He had a friend who had a pony and trap, and they both of them used to drive me out of a Sunday, and which I liked because you get all stuffed up hanging about in a café till two in the morning and drinking flûtes and bocks and whatnot, not to mention dancing and singing.

"Well, this friend of mine always had the *News of the World* sent him regular every week from home. He liked reading about all the murders. He used to say when anyone had been away from England for years like what he had it was only the murders and divorces and suchlike which gave you the feeling you was back at home again. They never seem to change, he always said. Well, he was reading his *News of the World* one Sunday afternoon last March, because he always read it of a Sunday, though of course out in Bordeaux it was always the Sunday before which he was reading, but though it used to come regular on a Tuesday he wouldn't open it till the Sunday. 'You *are* barmy,' I used to tell him, but no he wouldn't open it. He was like that. Very quiet. But as obstinate as they make 'em. Well, on this Sunday afternoon in March when we couldn't go out driving with his friend in the pony and trap because the weather was so rotten, he suddenly called out, 'Cis, hark at this advertisement. If Miss Cicely Oliver, last heard of in 1896 at Chertsey, Surrey, will call at Messrs. Brinton, Hargreaves, and Bond at 160

Howard Street, Strand, W.C., she will hear of something to her advantage.' 'Well,' I said, 'what of it?' I said. 'That's got nothing to do with me, that hasn't,' I said. 'Firstly my name's Cecilia Mary and secondly I was never in Chertsey in 1896, or any other time if it comes to that,' I said. But of course his lordship as usual was obstinate. He started to puff through his moustache, and which was a habit he had when he was being obstinate, and argue me out that this firm of solicitors might have made a slight mistake through them hearing of me as Cissie Oliver and thinking Cissie was short for Cecily. 'Yes, and I suppose they made another mistake and thought Chertsey was short for Princess May Road, Stoke Newington, which was where my poor old mother was living in 1896 and her the only relation I had in the world. I was all over the place myself in 1896, but I was never in Chertsey. The nearest I ever got to Surrey was in panto with George Conquest at the Surrey Theatre about 1890. I don't remember the exact year, but it was Vallingtine and Orson.'

"It was no good. He just puffed away at his moustache, and nothing would satisfy him but I must go back to England next day and become a millionairess right off. 'Why don't you let me write?' I said. But he said writing was no good. Solicitors wanted to be sure they had the right person when there was money knocking around. Well, to cut a long story short he offered to pay my fare back to London and give me ten pounds for my expenses while I was becoming a millionairess, and seeing it was no use arguing with him any more I gave in. The *patron* was a bit annoyed when he heard I was going off at a moment's notice like that, but when

my friend told him I was going for money he brought a bottle of champagne and we drank *salut* all round. The French are like that. They think a lot about money. Still, I suppose we all do. Only they're more open about it. I crossed over by Havre and Southampton and got to London all right, but when I went to the solicitors it was just as I thought. It was another girl altogether, and she'd already been and heard of whatever it was to her advantage. They didn't tell me what it was. Just showed me out and said they were sorry I'd been put to such inconvenience, but the advertisement had been worded quite clearly. When I was walking down Howard Street to Temple Station I felt so wild I think if my friend had been there I'd have pulled his massive moustache out by the roots.

"But that wasn't the worst of it. I told you he'd given me ten pounds for my expenses. Well, if ever you heard of a judgment on any one, listen to this. You remember when I met you in Geneva I'd just lost my bag and I found it again through St Anthony? Well, when I was praying I promised I'd try and live a better life in some ways. *You* know: I as good as said I'd never have anything to do again with the one or two friends who I'd been nice to. Well, of course, when I got to Bordeaux this promise went the way all men's promises go, and I missed my duties if you know what that means, but a Catholic girl ought to watch out and not do that, and then the judgment came on me, because my bag was pinched that morning in the Underground on my way back to the room where I was staying in Earl's Court. I'd laid it beside me on the seat like a fool. It was there at Westminster Bridge and I missed it at Sloane Square.

Well, I told the landlady in Finborough Road what had happened and she agreed to let me stay on for a week till I could hear from my friend in Bordeaux.

"And then what do you think happened? Why, after waiting for a fortnight I got a letter from the woman who kept house for him to say my friend and the friend of his who had the pony and trap had gone for a drive and been run into by a train and were both dead and buried. Well, I explained what had happened to the landlady, and though she looked down her nose a bit (because the letter was in French you'll understand and she may have thought I was telling the tale), she agreed to let me stay on another week and look for work. I did ask her to lend me the money to pay my fare back to Bordeaux, but that was a bit more than she could stand, and I didn't blame her. But could I get any work? No, I couldn't. Anyway, I pawned enough of my things to pay her the half of what I owed, and then I moved into a cheaper room, and then one night a fellow followed me from Earl's Court Station and I took him in. But don't ask me to tell you any more. Because the rest is beyond a joke. I suppose when that fellow went back with me and gave me a pound I thought I'd soon get enough to pay my fare back to France where I knew I'd get work, but I was wrong."

The little woman whose heavy rouge but called attention to her peaked face and pointed nose and retreating chin drank the hot whisky, hardly lukewarm by now, and sat back in a moody silence.

"Thank goodness, I met you to-night," John exclaimed. "Where are you living?"

She named a street near the Euston Road.

"But I don't take men there," she went on. "It's an hotel or nothing for me. But I couldn't afford gay rooms."

"I haven't the money with me now," he told her, "but I'll send it to you to-morrow, and you can get your things out of pawn and pay your fare back to Bordeaux."

"Not to Bordeaux," she said quickly. "I think Bordeaux isn't my lucky number. I could go to Lyons. There's a place there where I've often worked and the *patron* is a good sort. But, Johnnie, can you afford it? It's an expensive fare."

"Certainly I can afford it."

She put out her hand and caught him by the wrist anxiously.

"You don't think I'm telling you the tale, Johnnie? I won't say I didn't hope you might offer to help me when you heard of the trouble I was in, but I wouldn't have asked you right out in case you couldn't have afforded it and that would have made you feel uncomfortable. I think nothing makes anyone feel so uncomfortable as when somebody asks them for money and they simply haven't got it to give, and you're afraid of being thought mean."

"I think I've enough money of my own in the bank. But if I haven't I can get it from my father. Will twenty-five pounds be enough?"

"Will twenty-five pounds be enough?" she gasped.

And then to his acute embarrassment and the steely interest of the barmaid she began to sob, the tears rolling down her cheeks and sticking in the powder like the first raindrops on drouthy ivy leaves at summer's end.

"It's silly to cry," she sniffed, "but it's the goodness of the Holy Family. You see, I put my case before them

this morning in a church where I go when I've been thinking that one of the bridges might do the trick for me, and I promised if only they would take me out of this awful muddle somehow I'd shake my head even to the men friends I might meet at my work. Of course, I'd promised as much before, but a promise to a saint isn't quite the same thing somehow, God forgive me. And now here's the answer."

"But will you be sure of work in Lyons?"

"I'll be sure of work somewhere in France. They give girls a longer run there than what they give them in England. I might go on getting engagements for several years yet."

"And then?"

She shrugged her shoulders.

"Well, I might get married," she said.

But John saw her in the future growing more and more peaked, saw her nose sharpening and her thin body shrivelling, saw her, within a few years now, incapable of earning even the wretched livelihood into which misfortune had recently plunged her. What would happen to her then? Once upon a time in Geneva, when she had rescued him from a difficulty which was so infinitely minute compared with the immense difficulty that the whole of her future life must present to this solitary woman, she had looked forward into the future and spoken of her dream to save enough money to take a little shop somewhere in an English country town where she could sell sweets and tobacco and papers and be able to enjoy talking to her customers. How much would such a shop cost? More than she was ever likely to save. How much would such a shop cost? Would

Elise lend him the money which he could repay her when he was of age? Or would his father advance it?

"Look here, Cissie. Give me your address. I'll come round to your house to-morrow afternoon with the money."

"Not there," she said quickly. "I wouldn't let you come there, not if I was dying. I'll meet you somewhere. I don't mean anywhere where you'd be ashamed of being seen with me, but some quiet place near where I live. But not where I live. It's an awful place, Johnnie. It is really."

John tried to insist on seeing the house where she was lodging because he wanted to arm himself with the facts in case there was opposition to his plan. The misery of a human creature could be so much more effectively painted if he beheld that misery. However, the little woman was firm in her refusal to give him her address and threatened that if he succeeded in tracing her home she would refuse all his help and fling herself from one of the Thames bridges rather than meet him again.

"There's a limit to what anyone can stand," she declared. "And I couldn't stand for you to see the place where I'm living now."

In the end they arranged to meet in this same saloon bar the next evening.

John put Cissie's case before Elise in the morning.

"I could give her the money to go back to France, but that's only postponing a repetition of what has happened to her since she left Bordeaux. I don't know what one might have to pay for a small shop, but I suppose one could buy a business for about £200. I believe the paper to look in is the *Morning Advertiser*. If you can't lend me the money until I come into my capital I'll ask

father, but I wouldn't like him to think there had ever been anything between me and this poor woman, and I wouldn't like him to run away with the idea that I was going to be easily imposed upon by anybody who asked for money. My notion was to give her enough to get her things out of pawn and live in some decent lodgings until the right business is found. I have £32 in the bank at the moment, and I shall be getting my money for Oxford so that I can spend this £32, I was going to spend it on pictures and extra furniture for my rooms anyway, so that it only means going without them, which is nothing. If you can't manage the amount for the shop, you must tell me frankly, and if I tackle father you'll have to support me."

Elise pondered for a moment. She was thinking what an excellent opportunity this might be for bringing her husband and her stepson together if only Alec would be sympathetic. But could she count on Alec? If he were to approach the matter with the conventional caution of a lawyer and a man of the world he would finally antagonize John. They were beginning to show signs of establishing a friendship. John had gone down with him to Dunchester last week and heard him address a meeting of his supporters. He must have been tactful too, because Alec had told her when he came back that he believed John had thoroughly enjoyed himself and had commented on the political situation with a good deal of intelligence. Yes, he must have been trying to be tactful, for he had confided to her that Liberals were a complete puzzle to him, and that after his father was supposed to have given a particularly clear and full exposition of Liberal policy during the years when they were preparing

to assume the burden of government which would at last fall from the weary shoulders of the Unionists.

"I'll lend you the money, John," she said.

When John met Cissie again in the saloon bar of that public-house she was still wearing the bedraggled summer frock, and soaked by the cold rain which had set in with an unseasonable east wind earlier in the day. She had left off her rouge, and he was shocked by the grey pallor and the hollow eyes which were now painfully evident. He reminded her of the shop she had told him about in Geneva and asked her if she still had the same fancy. At first she would not listen to the idea.

"What? Start setting girls up for life at your age? Don't be silly, Johnnie. Why, everyone would think you'd got me in the family way and I was trying to put it across you. No, if you pay my fare back to Lyons you'll have done more than your share where I'm concerned."

"We'll argue about that when you've got yourself some proper clothes and found yourself some decent rooms. You don't look well to-night."

"I'm not feeling very well."

"I've brought you ten pounds for immediate expenses." As he said this John was aware that the cold-eyed barmaid was watching them and he resolved not to give Cissie the gold in front of her. "Look here," he went on, "I'm not going to give you the money in this place. I think you ought to go home anyway. I'll drive you back in a cab, and to-morrow morning you can clear out and get your coat out of pawn and we'll find you proper lodgings somewhere. You can meet me for lunch at Roche's in Old Compton Street. One o'clock. I'll be waiting for you outside, because it's often rather crowded and

noisy. You'd better have some hot whisky now before we go."

"No, no, I couldn't touch anything. I feel rotten, Johnnie. You can drive me to the corner of Lessing Street where I live. I'll be out of it to-morrow. You are good to me. You mustn't think I'm taking it for granted like the one-eyed Mexican who pushed his best girl under a tramcar and never even begged her pardon."

Lessing Street was a dim forbidding row of ramshackle houses in Somers Town. She pushed up the trap and told the driver to stop.

"Roche. R-o-c-h-e," he spelt. "On the left-hand side of Old Compton Street going toward the Palace. I'll be waiting for you at one o'clock."

He jumped out of the cab to help her out.

"Good lord, you are wet," he exclaimed. "Get to bed at once, won't you?"

"Oh yes, I'll snuggle down under the blankets. Ta-ta, see you to-morrow, Johnnie."

She had pushed the sovereigns he had given her down one of her stockings, and from where he stood on the pavement watching her walk up the street it seemed to him that she dragged one of her legs as if even the weight of the gold was too much for her weakness. The door of the house before which she stopped was exactly opposite the only lamp-post on that side of the short squalid street. As in her sodden summer frock she let herself in with her key there flashed back to him a sudden memory of Rose letting herself in into the house in Portman Square in that May dawn only four months ago; and when he arrived back in Church Row that evening he found an invitation to her wedding at Paxford in October.

"I'll go," he told the shimmering silvery letters.
There was a note from Rose herself in the morning.

MEDLICOTT HALL,
PAXFORD,
LOAMSHIRE
September 17, 1901.

Dear John,

Mother has sent you an invitation to my wedding. I don't know if you'll be up at Oxford already, but I would like you to come if you can. It would make me very happy.

*With love from
Rose*

He was glad he had made up his mind the night before and accepted the invitation already. He would write and tell Rose that.

There was no sign of Cissie Oliver when John reached Roche's, and there was no sign of her when he had been waiting outside for half an hour. At two o'clock she had still not arrived. So he went in and managed to get a table from which he could keep an eye on the street. At half-past two when he had finished his lunch Cissie had not come. She must have made a mistake in the name of the restaurant. He walked up and down Old Compton Street peeping into the various eating-places, but did not find her in any one of them. The only thing for it was to go over to Somers Town and try to obtain some news of her in Lessing Street.

At Number 8 the house opposite the lamp-post the door was opened by a smutty-faced girl with the per-

petually open mouth of adenoids, who when she saw the caller seemed inclined to slam the door in his face.

"Doesn't Miss Oliver live here?"

"'Oo?"

"Miss Cissie Oliver."

"No one doesn't live here o'ny Mrs Tew, and she's not a tome just now."

"But Miss Oliver was living here till this morning anyway, because I saw her come back last night."

The girl's mouth gaped wider. She looked back over her shoulder in obvious perplexity. Then she called to somebody in a room at the back.

"Mr Meggy! Mr Meggy! Jest c'mera minute, Mr Meggy, please!"

From the room at the back emerged a red-faced unshaven man in corduroy trousers and the filthiest shirt John had ever seen.

"What's all this?" demanded the new-comer in a hoarse surly voice.

"It's somebody come about her as was upstairs," the girl explained. "I told him there wasn't nobody living here on'y Mrs Tew."

"'Op it, you," Mr Meggy grumbled savagely. "Can't you take bloody no for a bleedin' answer?"

"Look here," John replied in a rage, "I don't know what's going on in this house, but if I don't get a quick answer about Miss Oliver I'm going round to the police-station."

"Oh, you are, are you? Well, Mrs Tew's round with the perlice bloody now. So 'op it like I told you to."

"Where's Miss Oliver?" John repeated.

"What's that to you?"

"I've come here from Miss Oliver's lawyer."

The red-faced man was clearly impressed by this.

"Then you've come too late. Because she died in the night. We've only found it out just half a bloody hour back, and Mrs Tew's gone off to notify the perlice."

"Died in the night?" John gasped. "Do you mean she's dead?"

"Well, if the pore bloody 'ore (because that's all as she was) died in the night even a —— of a lawyer ought to know she ain't now."

John turned on his heels. He would find out the truth at the police-station. The inspector to whom he told his story shook his head.

"It's a rotten bad house," he declared. "You gave her ten pounds, eh, last night? I wonder . . . still, I don't think they'd have notified us. And you say she did seem ill? Well, the station surgeon has just gone round there now. It'll depend on what he says. You'd better wait, or no, I'll send you round with a constable, and you can tell the surgeon what you've just told me."

The arrival of John with a constable brought the neighbours of that ramshackle street to their doors. Grimy children clustered by the railings of Number 8.

Mr Meggy was not in evidence on this occasion, and the smutty-faced girl led them up three foul-smelling flights of uncarpeted stairs to the attic where Cissie Oliver had died. There was no furniture except a three-legged chair on which stood a chipped enamel basin. The cracked panes of the dormer window were patched with newspaper, and mouldering laths showed among the plaster of the ceiling like obscene ribs except where a hole right through revealed the pantiles of the roof. On a bundle

of rags in the corner lay the body of Cissie Oliver dressed still in that faded summer frock. The doctor, a neat brisk little man, was questioning a great shapeless woman whose crooked bonnet gave her a drunken look.

"It's a clear case of exposure aggravated by under-nourishment," the doctor was declaring.

John suddenly made up his mind to say nothing more about the ten pounds. If the wretched inhabitants of this house had found them and taken them, let them keep them. He felt guilty as a member of the society which could tolerate the existence of houses like this. The ten pounds should count as blood money paid by himself.

"I wish to defray the expenses of this poor woman's funeral," he announced.

The police-surgeon looked at him sharply.

"That's all right, sir," the constable put in. "Inspector Dawkins sent me round with this gentleman. There was some question of money . . ."

"Question of money!" Mrs Tew interrupted with shrill indignation. "Yes, there certainly is a question of money. She owed me for two weeks at four shillings a week, and that's eight shillings I've lost not to mention all the people in the street staring at my house the same as if it was a murder. That's all the thanks anyone gets for being a bit soft-hearted these days. Half the bluebottles in the districk buzzing round a poor woman's house to make a poppy-show of me."

"Here's your eight shillings," said John. Anything, anything, to help free himself from the sense of shame which lay so heavily upon him for the starvation of an unhappy woman who had offered all she had, her body, for food and shelter and clothing.

The constable was about to say something, but John stopped him.

"I made a mistake," he said curtly. "I'll explain to the Inspector. Will there be an inquest?" he asked, turning to the doctor.

"It's a clear enough case, but of course an inquest will be necessary."

John explained to the Inspector that he had gone to Lessing Street with the intention of giving the dead woman ten pounds and he pulled out the sovereigns from his pocket in proof of this. The inspector looked at him shrewdly.

"Oh, well, sir," he said at last. "I can see your point of view. All the same it goes a bit against the grain to let the people in that house get away with it. And I suppose you'd rather not be called as a witness before the coroner?"

"I don't mind as far as I'm concerned. But I wouldn't like it to get into the papers on account of my father."

He told who his father was, whereupon the Inspector immediately declared that there was no need to call him as a witness.

"The doctor says it is a clear case, and there's no need to drag other people into it."

So in the end, although John attended the inquest, he was asked no questions.

"It seems a clear case, gentlemen," said the coroner to the twelve jurymen all of whom had the offended expression of men who had been interrupted in their business of gaining their daily bread. The jury nodded unanimously. They wanted to get back to work as soon as possible. So a verdict of death from natural causes was returned. The woman belonged to the unfortunate class, as the

coroner had pointed out, and if women like that walked the streets in summer frocks on empty stomachs their deaths were in the order of things. No rider was added to the verdict, no rider pointing out that such a death was a blot upon the perfect civilization of the greatest city of the world's greatest empire in the nineteenth hundred and first year of the Lord. Any commiseration required was required for the gentlemen of the jury who had been caught like minnows in the indifferent net of the Law and were gasping to breathe their natural element again.

When John was confronted by the complications which the burial of a solitary woman found dead in a wretched lodging-house entailed he was tempted to give up the responsibility he had expressed his intention of assuming and nearly took the inspector's advice to leave her body to the care of the parish. Fortunately for his peace of mind he consulted the nearest priest, a robust Irishman, who after hearing the story of Cissie Oliver so far as John could tell it came to the rescue and a grave was secured for her in the Catholic cemetery at Kensal Green.

"And I'd like to put up some kind of a simple stone cross," John told Father Burke when he visited him the day after Cissie Oliver had been buried. "It's asking a great deal of you, but if you could have the right kind of epitaph inscribed, I'd be most awfully obliged. I noticed a good many with *Jesus Mercy, Mary Help*. I think she'd like to have that put on. And if you would let me know what it costs I'll send you the money. And also I'd like to have Mass said for her. She was really very pious as I told you."

"And you're not a Catholic, eh?" Father Burke

observed, with a quizzical glance at this strange young man.

John had a sudden impulse to say that he wished to become a Catholic, but Fitz's warning against emotional ardours intervened.

"No, I have to make up my mind more clearly about such a step," he said. "But that will not prevent you from doing what I ask?"

"It certainly will not. Let me see. Cecilia Mary Oliver was the poor creature's name. I'll just make a note of that. Well, Mr. Ogilvie, it has been a great pleasure to meet you." The priest hesitated a moment. "And if ever," he went on rapidly, "if ever you do make up your mind by God's grace, don't seek out some intellectual Jesuit father, but go to a simple parish priest. And don't think that piece of advice just my confounded impudence."

"I'll remember it," John promised. "And you'll let me know what I owe you for everything?"

"You can be sure of that," Father Burke promised with a boisterous guffaw, on the echoes of which John left his dingy little house in that district of railway lines and gasworks, of slaughter-houses and slums and model gaols—one of the flowers in the buttonhole of the nineteenth century's respectable frock-coat.

When John got home he found a letter from Miriam Stern waiting for him with a note from Emil to say that he was back in London for the new term and asking John if he could manage it to come and have supper with him in Claremont Gardens that evening.

*Poste Restante,
Cracow.*

My dearest John,

We have found Julius his house, and I am writing to tell you about it because I know that Emil will tell you nothing more than that it is a house. I won't bother you with difficult Polish names, but it is about forty miles from Cracow and according to the point of view at the end of nowhere or the beginning of everywhere. It is in an old-fashioned fairy-tale countryside—goose-girls wandering with their flocks about the fields from which the second crop of hay was just cut, and painted wooden houses with high steep roofs finishing almost on the ground, and youths roaming about playing pipes and all looking like youngest sons who will help an old woman out of a difficulty and find that in doing so they have helped a powerful fairy who will show them the way to win the King's only daughter as a reward. The house of Julius is miles from a railway-station, and even the nearest railway-station is on the other side of the Vistula so that as soon as one gets out of the train one has to cross a ferry—a lovely lazy ferry which makes one feel one would like to go drifting down the river for ever and not bother to reach the opposite bank at all.

The house itself is not too large and the big kitchen will make a perfect music room. The outside is covered with a sky-blue wash, and when we saw it first from far away among its cherry-trees and plum-trees we thought it was a pool of water. In every direction the land stretches absolutely flat in great tracts of grass, or fields of corn which is stubble now, but which will be wonderful when it is all a waving mass of gold next

summer with the cloud-shadows moving serenely across it. And the women iworking in the fields wear such bright petticoats and scarves that when you see them in the distance they look like patches of growing flowers. I have found an admirable woman to look after Julius—a widow without children and with all her relations in America. He is enchanted that I gave way about what he calls the lady help. Probably he is right. He will feel much more his own master with a simple peasant woman than with a faded duenna and he will probably be better looked after from a maternal point of view. I have told her about his illness and the importance of being well and simply fed, and I have extracted from him a most solemn vow to allow himself to be mothered, with the threat of refusing to leave him or of finding the lady help he so much dreads.

Emil upset me by prophesying that the peasants would soon find out Julius was a Jew and that he would probably be murdered by them as an act of piety. In the end I decided to take the village priest into my confidence and explain exactly what Julius had done and what he hoped to do. To Emil's boundless indignation, I may add, for Emil, in spite of his defiant proclamation of believing in nothing except the amelioration of mankind, is in his heart deeply attached to the traditions of our race. I told the priest I should offer no opposition if Julius should discover that this life he has chosen inclined him to become a Christian. We—Emil and I—had over that the greatest battle we have ever had. He accused me of the basest pandering imaginable by my action, but the priest who is an extremely intelligent man seemed to understand perfectly my point of view and assured me that without

making the slightest effort to influence Julius he should treat him as one looking for the truth. Then it was arranged that Julius should study Latin and German and Polish with him. ‘Latin!’ Emil scoffed, ‘as if the dog Latin he would learn with him could be called Latin!’

But it was Julius himself who finally conquered any doubts the good priest may still have had by playing to him more exquisitely than I have ever heard him play, for—and this is just as it should be in such a fairy-tale country—the priest himself is a violinist. He had said nothing about this when I had first told him about Julius. Perhaps he did not believe me, and did not wish to appear discourteous. When Julius stopped, he went to a press, took out his own instrument, and tapped it. ‘I have sought for the truth here,’ he said, ‘but I have never found it. No matter, I have found the truth elsewhere. Your son has found the truth here, and perhaps I may help him to find the truth elsewhere. I have a friend, a schoolmaster in a village twelve miles away, who plays the piano well enough to accompany your son. He will come to me every Saturday, and when the boy is in the mood what nights we shall have here this winter!’

And then he looked a little ruefully at his own cottage piano in the corner. Julius urged me to try it, and I played your favourite Traümerei. ‘Well, I should call that more Alpdrucken than Traümerei,’ said Julius bluntly. ‘Alp’ is nightmare in case your German fails you. The priest shook his head. ‘It’s the only piano we have.’ ‘There’s plenty of room here for a small grand,’ Julius announced. ‘And as I shall have to have

a piano, it can be put here. We will get one in Cracow.' Our reverend friend was so excited that he rushed out of the house and called the boy who looks after his vegetables and poultry to send him off on horseback to tell the schoolmaster that he would find a new piano when he came to see him next. I said hurriedly that it would probably take a little time to get the piano, and suggested that he should not raise his friend's hopes to such an extent. 'But he must hear the news to-day,' the priest declared. 'He has been wishing for a good piano for ten years. His own is worse than mine.' I suggested he should write the schoolmaster a note to explain that a new piano was expected, and that as soon as it arrived he should be told.

So that was how the matter was settled, and yesterday Julius and I secured a lovely small Blüthner, which will reach the priest's house during the week. Emil will no doubt tell you that I have behaved disgracefully, but do not heed what he says, dearest John, because I am infinitely relieved to think that I shall have a trustworthy person here who will keep me informed about Julius. It seems much less of a risky experiment now. I shall stay on until about November. We are getting such delicious furniture, and you will have to go out and stay with Julius next Spring when the corn is green and you have your vacation. I think I will leave him to himself for this winter with the priest and the widow and the schoolmaster and the snow.

Write me your news when you have time and are in the mood for a letter. Julius sends his love and so do I.

Miriam

I shall see you in November, John.

The house in Claremont Gardens was almost eerily empty without her when he went round that evening to sup with Emil. The sea-green velvet curtains had been taken down and as a background to the dust-wrappers on the furniture and particularly over the Steinway grand the grey walls were tristful and drear.

The walls they were tristful and drear;
The skies they were ashen and sober;
The leaves they were crispèd and sere—
The leaves they were withering and sere;
It was night in the lonesome October
Of my most immemorial year.

It might not be October yet, but there was a cold mist hanging over Hampstead to-night which had chilled to death the last illusion of summer's loitering, and the jingle of *Ulalume* ran in John's head when he stood in that grey drawing-room empty of its mistress.

He was glad when he and Emil retired to the little room at the end of the front hall and they were sitting beside the gasfire, with the grandfather's romantic picture of revolutionary Poland in 1863 to stare at over the mantelpiece. This room did not miss her. This room belonged to Emil and himself. In years to come he would look back to this little room and to Fitz's little room at the end of the front hall in Trelawny Road with how much gratitude for the refuge they had offered from the oppressions of youth's unending present, twin caskets of futurity.

"I suppose *ma mère* has told you about this idiotic house of Julius's?" Emil asked.

"It sounds jolly good."

"Oh, the house is all right, but in a spasm of maternal apprehension she took a priest in tow as a mentor for the little man and I fear the worst."

"I disagree with you. It seems to me that the whole point of this withdrawal into what is as near to independence as anybody of his age ever achieved is to have a chance of making up his own mind."

"I don't consider our Julius has much mind to make up," the elder brother retorted. "Musicians never have, you know. As far as I can make out, they suffer from premature senility in youth and arrested development in age."

"Oh, well, you'll be going back to school to-morrow like a good little man yourself. To me that sounds infinitely more ridiculous than anything Julius could possibly do or think or become during this next winter."

Emil's delicate eyebrows met in a scowl which recalled his younger brother's expression.

"And the damnable thing is that I can't be Captain of the School because, forsooth, I'm a Jew!" Emil growled.

"You didn't tell me that in Cracow."

"I was top of the Upper Sixth last term," he went on. "I was ahead of nine people who are going up to the Varsity with scholarships next month and yet because I'm a Jew, Wilton, who was eleventh in the form in the exams last summer, Wilton is preferred to me."

"But why do you want to be Captain of the School?" John asked in amazement. "It's a most frightful bore except for the kind of people who always are captains of schools."

"That's not the point. I was head of the Upper Sixth last term. I shall be head of the Upper Sixth all this year. I shall get a scholarship at Balliol, and that tiresome ass Wilton, who will be lucky if he gets a scholarship at St John's, Cambridge, and probably won't manage more

than Emmanuel, Wilton is to be Captain over my head. Because the Captain of the School has to read the Latin prayers every morning and afternoon I cannot take the position to which I am entitled. It's incredible, why, we might still be living in the Middle Ages!"

"Emil, I think you're an awful humbug. You've shaken me badly. I believe that in your heart you're nothing but a besotted Kiplingesque Imperialist with visions of becoming a great proconsul one day. My hat, you may even dream of being a second Disraeli for all I know, and defiling another lovely English flower by associating it with these filthy Party politics. And I was looking forward to a lifelong friendship. This is the most smashing disillusionment of my life."

"Can't you realize the absurdity of depriving somebody of the promotion to which he is entitled, for the sake of a string of Latin prayers?" Emil demanded.

"You think the other seven hundred little darlings should go prayerless, is that it?"

"It wouldn't hurt them," Emil retorted with bitterness. "But of course I'm not suggesting that. What I maintain is that these Latin prayers are an outworn convention and that therefore I can read them with as much propriety as a dreary clod like Wilton."

"It's no use, Emil, I can't take your grievance seriously. Nobody is more scornful than you about the figureheads of government, and now you want to be a figurehead yourself. The captain of a school like St James's has no power. Everybody who knows anything will know that you are the star brain of the place. What would you gain by being stared at by a lot of squitty kids while you gabbled through prayers?"

"I have a good mind not to go back to the place at all to-morrow," said Emil moodily.

"Now that *is* a good idea," John agreed, frankly enthusiastic.

"No, it *isn't*," snapped the other. "You don't think I'd easily find two such teachers of Greek and Latin as Harvey and Askew? Oh, I shall get over the irritation of it. Don't let's talk about it any more."

John told him about Cissie Oliver and enlarged upon the reproach such a death as hers levelled against civilization.

"Don't be so hysterically unbalanced," Emil adjured him. "If a woman rashly chooses to consider herself capable of entertaining the public and then proceeds to betray her sex by underselling her body in the open market she can hardly expect to become a charge upon the state when business is bad."

"Damned little did she expect from anybody," declared John hotly.

"And anyway you can't build up an indictment against what you call civilization on the behaviour of one foolish woman," Emil went on.

"There was enough fuss made after she was dead. If it's necessary to enquire into the causes of such a death it is much more necessary to provide against the occurrence of such a death."

"And how would you do that?"

"You social reformers are not usually slow to discover something with which to interfere. You ought to be able to contrive a scheme for helping people in an emergency. The religious orders used to be able to do it in those Middle Ages to which you feel the present is so superior."

"These sentimental gothic arguments of yours are extremely tiresome, John. Why, women like Cissie Oliver were publicly birched in the Middle Ages, and exposed to every ignominy imaginable. I never heard of your religious orders trying to interfere with such barbarities. I hate all sentiment, but I hate most of all gothic sentiment. Did you ever take the trouble to study the history of the Jews during the Middle Ages?".

"Emil, I don't want you to think my next remark offensive, but I must point out that your people are too much inclined to think that they enjoy a monopoly of being persecuted. I recognize that they had an unpleasant time, but that unpleasant time must be judged in relation to the general condition of society. It was a period of violence, when human nature was expressing itself violently in every direction. In the Middle Ages you would never have been admitted as a scholar to St James's or to Balliol. Yet confess that you resent the partial exclusion from which you suffer to-day more than you would have resented the complete exclusion which would have been your lot in the past."

"But it is such humbug. If everybody or indeed if anybody believed in these prayers it would be a different matter, but nobody does. They are retained as a convenient way of ensuring a punctual and orderly assembling of the school at the beginning and end of the day's work. Religion nowadays is merely a desire to maintain authority, protect property, and keep people in their place. The antipathy to Jews is no longer religious and it is hardly racial. It is an antipathy based on a jealous fear of their superior level of intelligence and of their more realistic commercial sense. To that may be added

distrust of a race which seems parasitic because it lacks a country of its own. And I think that still another reason for the modern hatred of the Jews is the doubt they raise in the minds of the European imperialist who wants to assure himself that all Asiatics and Africans are naturally inferior to himself. It is galling for those who would like to partition China and its three or four hundred million inhabitants among a quartet of European powers to wonder how much they themselves may be at the mercy of Asiatics like us."

"Then since you have discovered the cause why do you bother your head about the effect? The captaincy of the school is only another convention. Surely you can afford to despise it?"

"I suppose I can," Emil assented, but there was still a moodiness in his tone.

"This year will soon pass, and you'll be coming up to Oxford. I shall be glad when you are there."

"Will you be? I wonder. I've a notion that you'll repeat your school career at the University. You'll find such a lot of jolly fellows whom you rather like and who will rather like you, and you'll be driven by that into knowing the right people and joining the right clubs and leading the normal life of a fashionable undergraduate. I may be wrong, John. I'd like to be wrong. But I don't believe that you'll be able to resist floating along on the surface with the rest. Even when you had a chance to escape you went and joined those ridiculous Volunteers. You think you are going to write plays. But if you do you'll only write plays about the minor complications of ordinary people with the object of entertaining enough ordinary people to give you enough money to lead still

more comfortably the comfortable life you enjoy and then go on writing more plays about it. Occasionally you will be brought up against discomfort by a Cissie Oliver, and perhaps one day some particularly flagrant instance of it will lead you to write a play burning with a purely sentimental sense of social injustice. But it won't have such a good run as your usual plays, and although you will intend to disregard that, nevertheless somehow or other you won't disregard it and gradually you will sentimentalize your own sentimentality and humbug yourself with the notion that fate denied you the chance to express yourself as you wished. It will always be fate, of course, which will be the culprit, not your own choice of the easier way."

"Your mother thought I should benefit from a course of workaday existence," John countered.

Emil darted a look at him.

"My mother is in love with you," he said, "and therefore you have roused the deep conservative instincts of her womanhood to protect you. That is why I shall never love a woman. They are brakes on progressive thought."

John felt it was useless to contradict the statement about his mother. Contradiction might make Emil suppose that he thought he had been caught in an intrigue, and was ashamed of it.

"It's a kind of jealousy too," Emil went on. "She is not so foolish as to imagine that she can keep for herself a youth twenty years younger than herself, but she hopes to lock you up in an academic cell until she has the strength to surrender you to one of the innumerable women who will find you the embodiment of their romantic dreams."

John flushed.

"Look here, I object to being turned into a *petit-maitre*."

"Oh, you'll never be that. It's no use blushing about it, though . . ."

"I wasn't blushing. I may have got red with annoyance at what you said, but that's not blushing."

"What I was going to add when you interrupted," Emil continued calmly, "was that unfortunately for your protestations I know from personal experience the kind of charm in you which will captivate women. It is true that I loved you with what I consider was a far more inspiring passion than any woman could give you, but I have to admit, humiliating though such an admission may be, that presumably there must be some feminine quality in me which responds to your personality. You made a great song about your affair with that girl in the country, but I could not take it very seriously, because I knew that any woman who caught you in the right responsive mood must fall wildly in love with you."

"In spite of my fascination this girl in the country is marrying somebody else next week," John observed sarcastically.

"What has marriage got to do with the passionate side of the business? She is an English girl of the squirearchy, and therefore powerless to escape from the hundreds of years of breeding which have gone to fit her for the acquisition of land by marriage. What else could the poor girl do but marry as suitably as she intends to? The best you could have given her was a year of Romeoishness and Juliettery, by the end of which you would have fallen in love with somebody else. Why, you have all your twenties, and your thirties, and your forties, and perhaps even

your fifties in which to love and be loved by women, not to mention art and politics and more adventure. I don't want to pry into what you and my mother have talked about; but I am certain that she has faced your inevitable future, and from what I know of her I am equally certain that she will face it gracefully. Perhaps I shall annoy you, perhaps shock you, if I say that I hope she was lucky enough to fling away her pride, her sense of the ridiculous, and the conventions she has formed to fit in with her experience of life, and enjoy you however briefly as a lover. I have killed that side of my feeling for you, John, but not so as to leave it rotting and repulsive. I can still think that if I could have caught you in the right responsive mood I would have touched the perfection of emotional experience, quickly adding that the loss of the most perfect emotional experience is not irreparable but that on the other hand its loss will probably add to the perfection of intellectual experience.

"Well, I've said something of what I wanted to say to you to-night, but what I've not said is how much you have done for me. Your friendship has changed these last two years for me. I have suffered torments of jealousy over boys, over girls, over Julius, over my mother even, but you have given me far more than you denied me or took away from me. And though I argue with you, and though I have to despise your easy manners and easy popularity and cursed sense of humour I'll be thinking all this year of finding you again at Oxford. And if as I expect by next October I'll have worked myself up into a state of being slighted by everything you may say or do, it will only mean that I am afraid you have no further use for me. You see, I haven't been able to hide from myself

that you are really more interested in Julius nowadays than you are in me."

"But, Emil, you forget that without our friendship I could never have had my friendship with your mother or your brother. You are always so down on my superficiality that I dread vowing fidelity to a friendship. All I can say is that there is nobody who could take your place. Surely it's a mistake to make friendship or love a question of quantity? Fitzgerald for instance gives me something which you cannot give me"

"What?" interrupted Emil to demand fiercely.

"I suppose I should call it a spiritual ideal. Now don't raise your eyebrows. I was going on to say that Julius and your mother both give me something you cannot give. So does my stepmother. Rose gave me something. If it comes to that Connie Fenwick and that poor little woman who's dead and that French girl in Geneva all gave me something you cannot give. But do remember that you give me something which none of them can give, and that something is such a very great deal if you *must* think of friendship and love in terms of quantity. After all, do I give *you* everything?"

"You could have given me everything."

John shook his head and smiled.

"I couldn't even give you the captaincy of the school. Be honest with yourself, Emil, and admit that I could only give you everything by losing myself in you, by the time I'd done which you wouldn't know I was there."

"Oh well, it's no use theorizing over the possible results of an experiment which was never practical," said Emil.

"Do you remember that essay we wrote for Askew on

the difference in the attitude of the classical poets and the modern romantic poets toward love?"

Emil nodded.

"You persuaded me not to show up mine," he said. "Nevertheless, it would have been the only essay which contributed anything to the discussion. And you must admit that to steep ourselves in the literature of Greece and Rome, and at the same time to pretend that what is perhaps the chief emotional foundation of such a literature is unfit for open discussion is to turn our classical education into a bad joke."

"I do recognize that while we are being swayed by a classical education and while the emotions of boyhood and adolescence are being all the time deliberately distracted from the sexual idea of woman we behave normally by indulging our vitality with boys' love; but I suspect that woman offers man nowadays a much more potentially rich emotional adventure than she could offer him in ancient Greece or ancient Rome. Putting aside all theological prejudices, I would hazard that the most signal triumph of Christianity has been the comparatively rapid development of women."

"Another powerful argument against Christianity," Emil muttered.

"That's begging the question. The point I wish to make is that a woman is better worth while loving to-day than she was in the time of Pericles."

"Aspasia?"

"You cannot develop a sex by outlawing it," John said. "No doubt in a way it's absurd for you and me with our little pinch of experience to be theorizing like this, but I know intuitively that I am right, and I believe that any

attempt to restrict emotional experience to our adolescent fancies must leave the grown-up man in some way incomplete. You think that if you and I had changed the ground of our friendship and turned it into physical desire for one another we should have enriched it. I don't. On the contrary I believe it has actually been enriched by what we have withheld from it. I became friends with you at the moment when I was finding passions for boys with peachbloom complexions and slim figures an unsatisfactory repetition of one another, and so where my friendship with you began I did not waste any emotion on that side of it. You had not indulged your casual fancies to the extent I had, and therefore you had not suffered from the disillusionment of satiety. If we had become friends a year earlier than we did, I've no doubt at all that it would have meant a love-affair between us; but, don't forget, that it would also probably have meant that at this moment instead of sitting here and talking as intimately as we are both talking now we should long ago have passed out of one another's ken, and if we ever thought about each other we should have thought with an idle wonder at what we had seen in one another once upon a time. It's no use looking at me with such disapproval, Emil. I shall never search any more for love from one of my own sex, though perhaps when I grow old I shall look back to the boyish passions of school with the conviction that they were the real flower of passion. I think what most attracts us all about ancient Greece is that it was a world of glorious schoolboys whose like man will never know again."

"I shall never care for women as you are evidently determined to care for them," Emil declared. "Women

repel me. In any case, I don't intend to be the slave of that side of myself. I must be free myself if I am ever to hope to smash some of the chains which fetter the world. I could imagine with you an ideal freedom of two, but since that is not to be I will do without all except myself."

"But we shall go on being friends?" John asked, with a hint of anxiety in his tone.

"Yes, if in a few years' time you are still recognizable as an individual and are not merely a unit in an effete society waiting to be swept away by the uprushing flood of the people."

"I think you'll have to watch your rhetoric, Emil," said John severely. "Very few revolutionary leaders long survive their own eloquence."

"You don't think I shall be fool enough to talk like that in public, do you? Or that I shall talk like that even in private when I've finished with these years of preparation? I'm not a Young Liberal or a Social Democrat."

"Well," said John, rising, "I'm unwilling to go, because this evening marks the end of a stage in our life; but I've got to go sometime, and the end of the stage will come with sunrise even if I sit up here jawing with you all night. Besides, I've been reading aloud to my step-mother every evening recently, and I want to finish off *Emma* this week. I suppose you wouldn't condescend to read Jane Austen?"

"I once read *Pride and Prejudice*, but it seemed to me extraordinarily trivial stuff."

John sighed.

"When you say things like that I could wish that you would be blown sky-high with the first bomb of your damned revolution," he exclaimed.

Emil grinned maliciously.

"Now perhaps you can understand what the earnest Conservative feels when he hears his cherished institutions criticized by radicals. You are contemptuous of his hurt feelings; but the novels of Jane Austen are only another expression of privilege and property—the two chief ills which afflict humanity. You'll laugh at the bottle-nosed colonel, but dress the bottle-nosed colonel up as a Regency spinster in a country vicarage and you turn as true blue as the colonel's nose. So go away, you relic of antiquity, I must get to bed."

"Yes, you must have a good night or you'll be committing a final cretic, breaking a caesura, or putting a proper-spomenon instead of a paroxytone. Give my love to Harvey and Askew, and tell Wilton with my compliments to wash his neck a little oftener now that he's captain of the school."

A quarter of an hour later John was with Elise in the small sitting-room into which one of the bedrooms in Church Row had been transformed for her privacy. Over the fireplace hung a concave Dutch mirror, and while he was reading *Emma* to her the thought occurred to John of how like a Dutch mirror was Jane Austen herself, reflecting small tranquil corners of the world, each of them rounded by the frame of her art to the similitude of a whole world in miniature.

"I shall miss these charming hours with Jane Austen when you leave us in a fortnight, John," sighed Elise as

the small ormolu clock beneath the mirror chimed eleven and a chapter came to an end and the volume was closed.

"I shall miss them too. I was looking at David this morning. He's getting much more human now, isn't he?"

"John!"

"I mean losing that monkey-like look which recently born babies all have. When actually does a baby get at all interesting?"

"They're interesting from the moment they are born."

"To mothers perhaps, but not to anybody else, surely? It's a queer business. Having children, I mean. I can't believe it's just an accident in space."

"Having children?" exclaimed Elise.

"The whole business of life on this planet," he added. "Next week I'm going down to Paxford for Rose's wedding."

"You can regard the spectacle quite philosophically?"

"Yes, I think it's easier to recover from a sudden shock. And that was the way I heard of her engagement to Henry Falconer. I suppose you think that an emotion which passes so quickly could never have been very profound?"

"I don't think the depth of an emotion can be tested by cutting it off prematurely from any chance to express itself. The tests of love are usage and habit and continual propinquity and the capacity of two people for mutual accommodation. You and Rose will never know how successfully you might have settled down into married life together. I doubt if anything can be taken for granted from the violence of a first attraction. Lots of people would say that the very violence of it is of itself enough to make it short-lived. I would say that these violent attractions even when they are mutual possess a purely personal

importance. That you have recovered your equanimity already proves, if it proves anything, that you have a reasonable ego. You are not prepared to go through life without the slightest awareness of your relation to the rest of humanity. This will always lead to your being suspected of shallowness by those who have an exaggerated idea of the depth of their own feelings, owing to their own enjoyment of an illimitable dissatisfaction. Will you spin from inside like Charlotte Brontë and the spider or with a spinning-wheel like Jane Austen? With Richardson or with Fielding?"

"With Fielding every time," John declared.

"If you carry out your intentions and become a dramatist, that may be all to the good; but I rather fancy subjectivity will have an ever increasing importance in art during the time before us. I've been talking to a clever woman friend of mine this afternoon. Hence the brightness of my conversation at this late hour. I fancy women will surprise us presently. And that means subjectivity at the helm. My sex produces a thousand potential Brontës, Charlottes, Annes, and even Emilys, for one potential Jane Austen."

At this moment a faint perfume of cigar-smoke warned Elise and John that the head of the household had opened the library door.

"Alec will be on my tracks in a moment, John. I'm apparently to be made to go to bed early for the rest of this autumn."

John went along to join his father, and as usual he was asked first if Elise had gone to her room and next if he had seen Carruthers Gould's latest caricature in the *Westminster Gazette*.

fields testified to the year's age, so green was still the foliage, so benignly warm the fragrant air.

The church in Paxford was full, and John who was still young enough to feel embarrassed by a crowd was glad to catch sight of Tom Pownall who was acting as an usher and to be squeezed by him into a corner near one of the Medlicott tombs the effigies and cherubs of which usually occupied the north transept in exclusive dignity, the normal congregation being accommodated in the nave. The family pew of the Medlicotts, a pompous affair with Jacobean panelling, damasked armchairs, and immense lop-eared hassocks almost filled the south transept. From a gathering of the nearest Medlicott and Trotton relations Ann caught sight of John and waved. She was wearing a smart coat and skirt and already she had the air of being Miss Medlicott of Medlicott Hall instead of Rose's young sister Ann.

The atmosphere was heavy with the scent of flowers and moistened asparagus fern which mingled with the feminine silks and taffetas and the ecclesiastical mustiness compounded of damp stone, mildewed leather, ancient wood, and well-soaped choirboys. The village organist was letting himself go with the *vox humana* and not neglecting the *vox angelica*. There was a rustle and a shuffle. Rose in her veil and wreath of orange blossom carrying a bouquet of snowy Frau Karl Drushki roses was coming up the aisle on the arm of her father whose countenance against the whiteness of herself was vivid as burgundy. The four bridesmaids, none of whom John recognized, were dressed in a pastel shade of rose, carried bouquets of La France roses, and wore the pendants of pink topaz which had been the bridegroom's gift to them.

It was his failure to recognize any of the bridesmaids which first brought home to John how far he had been driven out of Rose's life. Looking round the church and noticing the familiar figures of brother officers, of various county celebrities, of Mr and Mrs Damson, of Dr and Mrs Meade, of Rose's mother and father and sister and brothers, he had felt himself being drawn back again into this green world of the English countryside in which he had planned to live for ever tranquilly with Rose, noting the day the cuckoo came, the day the swallow departed as famous occasions in the annals of a year. The sight of Henry Falconer in a frock-coat waiting for the bride had hardly disturbed that sweet recessive motion back into a dream. And then those four debonair bridesmaids, all intimate friends of Rose and all unknown to him, had snatched him back to wakeful reality.

In that unctuous mixture of a bleat and a moo which has become the accepted tone in which an Anglican parson indicates that he is uttering a religious formula expressed in rhythmical prose the Vicar of Paxford was asking the solemn questions of bridegroom and bride in turn, and from where he was sitting John could hear Henry Falconer declare:

"I Henry take thee Rose to my wedded wife, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death us do part, according to God's holy ordinance; and thereto I plight thee my troth."

The finality of it obliterated all emotion in John and left

him so utterly stunned for a moment that even if Rose's voice plighting her troth had been babbled out as clear as running water instead of being lisped as it were like a faint April wind among the springing grass he would hardly have heard her. Indeed, it was not until the strains of Mendelssohn's Wedding March went gallivanting round the church that he became completely conscious again of what was happening.

On his way across the park he was overtaken by Tom Pownall.

"Yes, I think Henry and Rosie have both done deuced well for themselves," Pownall said. "Have you been having a good time since Aldershot? You went to Poland, did you? Rather a queer lot over there, aren't they? I've had some good days with the partridges. The coveys have been really good this year, and by Jove it was hot at the beginning of the month. Shall we see much of you this autumn? Going to resign your commission? That's rather a bad egg after getting through at Chelsea. You might put your drills in with the Oxfords."

John could not be bothered to explain why the scarlet of the Loamshires no longer attracted him.

"Yes, I might do that," he agreed.

He was thinking now that in a few moments he would have to congratulate the bride and bridegroom. In which room would they be standing? Probably in that long library with the oriel windows looking out upon the lawns where he had first seen her gathering daffodils by the moonshine of last March. His guess was right. And as he made his way through the people to where she and Henry Falconer were standing together at the far end he was aware that the long border at one side of the great lawn

was now full of Michaelmas daisies, flowers associated since childhood with the end of happy hours.

"John, how sweet of you to come to-day."

And when she suddenly bent forward and gave him her cheek to kiss he apprehended once and for ever that she was married to somebody else. She seemed already five years older than on that night of May five months ago. He stammered out the conventional wishes for happiness, grasped Henry Falconer's hand, and was saved from wondering what he should say next by the press of people behind moving up to congratulate the bride and bridegroom.

That night he went with Elise to a Promenade Concert at the Queen's Hall. A young English pianist in whom a friend of hers was interested was playing Brahms's Concerto in D minor. John was particularly anxious to hear this work, because on that night in Cracow Miriam had told him that the first movement of it expressed for her more perfectly than any piece of music the struggle in her mind over surrendering to the ecstasy of that night and that the *adagio* of the second movement would never be heard by her without remembering with a warmth of passionate gratitude the tranquillity which had been granted to her by that surrender. John was not hopeful of gaining from the first hearing of a piano concerto what Miriam read into it for herself; but he did not want to miss the opportunity of trying to get somewhere on the way into the heart of music, and after the wedding of Rose he desired to be reminded of Miriam. Whether he could follow the concerto or not, it would evoke that night in Cracow and that broken trumpet call, which for him was the symbol of his emotional life up to the present.

They sat in the front row on the left side of the circle, looking down on a scene which was to be perhaps the most changeless scene in year after changing year of this mutable century just over nine months old. John could not make much of the *maestoso* of the first movement. He was willing to believe that it could stand for the struggle of the mind, but he felt that its expression of such a struggle was revealed to him by his own struggle to make out what it was all about. However, when the *maestoso* gave way to the *adagio* of the second movement he suddenly seemed to understand the music. At least, he had no difficulty whatever in putting himself into perfect accord with this mood. He was holding Miriam in his arms once more, as he had held her on that night in Cracow, and in the intensity of their nearness to each other fancying he could see her deep eyes glowing through the dark when her voice confided to him the treasures of an unlocked heart. Her hands had not caressed his cheeks less tenderly than the pianist now touched the keys of his instrument. The green-shaded lamps over the orchestra became a tree-top in which the piano was rocked like a cradle by the dreamy melody. It seemed sometimes as if the soloist must fall asleep at his playing and be borne away into the haze of tobacco-smoke above the white-faced crowded listeners in the promenade, as if the violins and violas and violoncellos would sink back into oblivion drowsed by their own playing, as if even Mr Henry Wood himself must presently lay down his baton and swoon away into a trance.

"This is most lovely," he whispered to Elise.

"It is the very spirit of peace," she whispered back.

John's attention wandered from the concerto during

the vigorous third movement. He studied the programme instead, and found that the next item was a symphonic poem called *The Swan of Tuonela* by a Finnish composer whose name, Sibelius, he heard for the first time. The black swan singing on a northern variant of the Stygian stream sounded promising; but he had been disappointed once or twice by symphonic poems, and he was not over optimistic about fitting the music to the words of the programme.

John bothered neither about sombre bird nor dark lake nor the misty northern hell when the music began. He was carried back by it to Sutherland. He heard the ancestral voices prophesying war. The shaded lamps, no longer a tree-top, were now the green waves breaking upon Sandwater Bay, wherein the orchestra swayed like a mass of tangle, and Queen's Hall itself turned stark and lonely and stern as one of the mighty hills of Assynt.

But when his spirit was back in Assynt the song of the bird became as clear to him as if his ears had been opened by enchantment. 'You shall go back ultimately', sang the dark swan of Tuonela, sang that dark swan while the waters of the mere swept by the north wind nagged at the shore. 'There lies the fulfilment of your weird. To my calling you shall come at last. Go southward now away from me, if you will; but my calling shall bring you back, however many heedless years may surge between. Mine, mine is the voice you shall one day hear above all those surging years,' sang the dark swan of Tuonela; and dabbling its beak among the sparse rushes of that northern mere the sombre bird was silent.

It was with the profoundest indignation that John came

back from the music to find that the audience was applauding it.

"Well, I don't want to be one of your subjective people, and attach too extreme a general importance to my own feelings," he told Elise. "But you know I lived all my life from birth to death during that piece of music. I do wish those people in the promenade would keep quiet. What *are* they clapping anyway?"

"The performance of an impressive work by a composer who is hardly at all known in this country."

"Yes, how stupid of me! I hadn't thought of it like that. I was thinking for the moment that everybody in Queen's Hall must be going through exactly what I was going through while *The Swan of Tuonela* was being played. You know, it's really a very good thing I didn't marry Rose to-day, because if we were married now and if I had heard those sublime drum-beats to-night I should have known that sooner or later daffodils and the green world they live in would not be enough. I say, do you want to hear the rest of the programme?"

"Not a bit."

"Then let's go," John said.

